

THE ANTI-SHI'A MOVEMENT IN INDONESIA

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I. INTRODUCTION

The possibility of violent attacks on Indonesia's Shi'a minority is rising as at least three streams of anti-Shi'a activism converge. Pro-ISIS extremists have begun to target Shi'a as they increasingly take cues from ISIS propaganda and exhortations from Indonesian fighters in Syria and Iraq. Saudi-oriented Salafis, following an ultra-puritan strand of Islam, see Shi'ism as a heretical sect (*aliran sesat*) that must be banned. They have stepped up advocacy efforts against it, using the backdrop of international events to warn that Shi'a are intent on wreaking destruction in Indonesia as they have in Syria, Yemen and Bahrain. Conservatives in Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), Indonesia's largest Muslim social organisation, are concerned about Shi'a recruitment of their members, especially in East Java.

The three streams reinforce each other, particularly in a climate where Islamist civil society has been using democratic space to press the government to assume a greater role in defining Islamic orthodoxy. This pressure over the last decade has led to violence and legal restrictions in Indonesia against the Ahmadiyah sect, but until recently there was less focus on Shi'a. As the risk of violence grows, it becomes increasingly important for the government to reject hate speech against members of the Shi'a community, affirm the principle of equality under the law for all citizens, regardless of belief, and ensure that Shi'a leaders and institutions are protected against vigilantism and terrorism.

The Indonesian Shi'a community is small, some 2.5 million out of a population of close to 250 million. They are divided into three groups: Ikatan Jamaah Ahlulbait Indonesia (IJABI); Ahlul Bait Indonesia (ABI); and Organisation of Ahlulbayt for Social Support and Education (OASE). IJABI, the largest, was established in 2000. ABI, founded in 2010 and much smaller than IJABI, is dominated by Sayyids (descendants of the Prophet) and religious scholars concerned with jurisprudence; it is more Iranian-oriented in terms of its doctrine and political stance. OASE is the smallest, with a more puritan outlook. Its growing militancy in the wake of anti-Shi'a advocacy has strained its relationship with the other two groups that have been careful in the past not to antagonise the Sunni majority.

The intensity of the anti-Shi'a campaign is new, although anti-Shi'a sentiment is not. The 1979 Iranian revolution inspired hopes for revolutionary change, particularly among Indonesian students and led to many conversions to Shi'ism, but it also heightened government suspicions and spawned a wave of anti-Shi'a propaganda from Saudi-linked foundations. In the mid-1990s, NU conservatives became increasingly concerned about the encroachment of Shi'ite schools into traditional NU strongholds in East Java and tried to mobilise locals against them. As political space for hardline Islamist groups increased after Soeharto fell, a somewhat uncomfortable tactical anti-Shi'a alliance emerged between some of the East Java NU leaders and Salafis campaigning on doctrinal grounds for a declaration of Shi'ism as deviant.

The campaign since the Syrian conflict erupted, however, is qualitatively different because it has the potential for targeted violence. The danger is that the above-ground anti-Shi'ism campaign, the underground activities of violent extremists and the emergence of a militant fringe within the Shi'a community could become a combustible combination.

This report looks at the history of the anti-Shi'a movement and how it has evolved, with particular attention to the impact of democratisation and the interweaving of domestic and international factors. It is based on extensive interviews with members of the Shi'a community and leaders of many of the anti-Shi'a groups, as well as on analysis of documents produced by both sides.

II. BACKGROUND: THE SHI'A IN INDONESIA

No one knows exactly how many Shi'a there are in Indonesia. Census data does not distinguish between Sunni and Shi'a, and the organisations themselves do not keep data on members. IJABI leader Jalauddin Rakhmat estimates 2.5 to 4 million, although some think even the lower figure is too high. As another IJABI official explained:

There were rumours from BIN [State Intelligence Agency] and from anti-Shi'a groups that there are five million Shi'a in Indonesia. Ustadz Jalal reduced it by half just to be on the safe side. But IJABI never did a head count. We don't have membership cards because many of our members do not want to be identified as Shi'a. Many have had problems with their careers when their employers found out they were Shi'a.¹

The "guesstimate" of 2.5 million would make them slightly more numerous than Buddhists and slightly fewer than Balinese Hindus.

The roots of Shi'ism in Indonesia remain a matter of debate. Shi'a leaders themselves suggest that it was brought to Indonesia through Aceh in the eighth century through preachers from the Hadramaut region of Yemen.² A new book underscores the complexity of determining historical origins because of the difficulty in trying to distinguish Shi'a-influenced rituals, which can be easily incorporated into Sunni traditions without any doctrinal implications, and Shi'ism as a belief system based on jurisprudence which differs in significant ways from Sunnism.³ There is ample evidence of the former going back to the early days of Islam in Southeast Asia but more identifiably sectarian forms of Shi'ism in the region are rare.⁴ By the nineteenth century, Shi'a believers were clearly present among the Arab-Hadrami community, though always a minority, and Indonesians of Arab descent make up a large proportion of the Shi'a community to this day.⁵ (The large Shi'a pesantren in Bangil, East Java is known by the local community as the "Arab pesantren".)⁶ The community began expanding after the Iranian revolution, and the late 1980s and 1990s saw deeper penetration of Iranian-oriented Shi'a theology and jurisprudence (*fiqh*) through hundreds of schools established by alumni of religious institutes in Qom.

A. Doctrine

The Sunni-Shi'a schism originated in a leadership dispute following the death of the Prophet Muhammad. Some believed the successor should be chosen from among the Prophet's Companions (*sahabat*) through a council of elders and tribal leaders (*shura*). Others believed that Ali bin Abi Thalib, the Prophet's cousin and son-in-law, had been chosen by the Prophet himself based on God's order and therefore should rightfully succeed him. The first group prevailed, and Ali was passed over three times until he finally became the fourth caliph. But his position was quickly contested, and he was killed in 661 AD by those loyal to Muawiyah, the founder of the Umayyad dynasty, whose son then killed the grandsons of the Prophet in a very bloody war of succession. Shi'a consider the first three caliphs and the Umayyads illegitimate because they usurped Islamic

1 IPAC phone interview with IJABI's leader, Bandung, 15 March 2016.

2 "Kisah Kang Jalal Soal Syi'ah Indonesia- Bagian 1," tempo.co, 3 September 2012.

3 See R. Michael Feener and Chiara Formichi, "Debating 'Shi'ism' in the History of Muslim Southeast Asia" in Chiara Formichi and Michael Feener, eds, *Shiism in South East Asia: Alid Piety and Sectarian Constructions*, (London, 2015).

4 The notable exception is the flourishing of Persian Shi'a in 16th-century Ayutthaya. We are grateful to Dr Michael Feener for pointing this out.

5 Zulkifli, *The Struggle of the Shi'is in Indonesia*, (Canberra, 2013), pp. 15-16.

6 Many Indonesian Sunnis are reluctant to acknowledge the Shi'a presence among early generation Hadramis. This is partly because most Shi'ite Hadramis had avoided practicing Shi'ism in public (*taqiyah*) to avoid conflict with local Sunnis, to the extent that some were widely known as Sunni ulama during their lifetime. Zulkifli, op.cit, pp. 15-16.

leadership from its rightful heirs.

Over time, what started as political factionalism turned into deeper doctrinal differences. Today Sunni and Shi'a share many core beliefs regarding *tawhid* (the oneness of God), Muhammad as the last prophet, and the Qur'an as the holy book. But there are some fundamental differences, in particular the concept of *imamah* (leadership). Shi'a believe that after the death of Muhammad, the Muslim community (*ummah*) will be guided by infallible imams, direct descendants of Ali chosen by God, who have the sole right to interpret the Qur'an and make rulings for the community; they thus have both a political and spiritual mandate. Sunnis see their leaders as guardians of Islam but not as infallible heirs of the Prophet who can directly deliver the wisdom of God. Globally, the Shi'a are divided into three main groups of which the largest, the Twelvers, includes most of the Indonesian community.⁷

Five critical concepts define the Shi'a community and its different groups in Indonesia today:

- *ahl al-bait* refers to the family of the Prophet through Fatimah, the Prophet's daughter, and her husband Ali, though Sunni and Shi'a differ as to who should be included. Shi'a in general only include the Prophet's offspring and not his wives.⁸
- *al-ghayba al-kubra*, or the Great Occultation refers to the Twelvers' belief that the twelfth imam was hidden by God in the ninth century to avoid yet another murder, and will return as al-Mahdi, the "guided one", at the end of time to save Muslims and restore justice.
- *taqiyyah*, the concealing of one's true faith under circumstances of imminent threat, has led Shi'a to sometimes pretend to be Sunnis to avoid discrimination and persecution, especially in areas where they constitute a minority.
- *wilayat al-faqih* or governance of jurists, is originally a concept developed by Shi'a scholars to deal with the "occultation" of the Twelfth Imam (al-Mahdi) by giving an authority to a class of Ayatollahs to assume his spiritual, administrative and political roles. The Shi'a ulama, however, differ on the scope and nature of this authority.⁹ The prevailing interpretation, taken from Ayatollah Ruhullah Khomeini's political dissertation *Islamic Government*, states that in the absence of the awaited Imam, the *wali al-faqih* has full authority to assume all religious and governmental duties traditionally attributed to the infallible Imams i.e. making Islamic rulings and managing the state's affairs.¹⁰
- *marja' al-taqlid* or source of emulation refers to the concept in Shi'a jurisprudence that requires Muslims to emulate and follow a living interpreter of Islamic law, or

7 Twelvers believe in a line of twelve infallible Imams descended from Ali. The twelfth Imam is believed to have entered a prolonged occultation in the late ninth century and will come back at the end of time to guide the Muslims to victory. Twelvers make up the majority of Shi'ites today especially in Iran, Lebanon, Iraq, and Bahrain.

The so-called Seveners, who believe in only seven imams, broke away from the Twelvers in the eighth century. They are now scattered in Afghanistan, India, and Pakistan. See Christopher M. Blanchard, "Islam: Sunnis and Shiites", Congressional Research Service, 28 January 2009; available on <https://fas.org/irp/crs/RS21745.pdf>. The third group, the Zaidiyah, also broke away from the Twelvers when they chose Zain bin Ali instead of Muhammad al-Baqir as the fifth imam. It is the branch of Shi'ism that is closest to Sunnism because its adherents do not believe in the infallibility of imams. The majority of Shi'a in Yemen are Zaidis.

8 This definition is based on Hadith Al-Kisa (Narration of the Cloak), which recounts how the Prophet gathered his daughter Fatimah, her husband Ali, and their children Hassan and Hussein under his cloak and announced them as his *ahl al-bait*.

9 Hamid Mavani, "Ayatullah Khomeini's Concept of Governance (wilayat-al-faqih) and the Classical Shi'i Doctrine of Imam-ate", *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 47, No. 5 (2011), pp. 807-824.

10 Imad Salamey and Zanoubia Othman, "Shia Revival and Welayat Al-Faqih in the Making of Iranian Foreign Policy", *Politics, Religion & Ideology*, vol. 12 (2011), no. 2, pp. 197-212.

mujtahid.¹¹ Emulation (*taqlid*) of Ayatollahs becomes the obligation of all Shi'a, and most Indonesian Shi'a regard Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, the current *wali-al-faqih* in Iran, as the highest source of emulation (*marja' al-a'la*).

These concepts not only distinguish Shi'a from Sunni, but differences in interpretation of the last two concepts also help define the different Shi'a groups in Indonesia today.

B. The Three Shi'a Associations

Until 2000 there were no officially recognised Shi'a organisations in Indonesia, but with the endorsement of President Abdurrahman Wahid, IJABI on 1 July 2000 became the first Shi'a mass organisation to register with the Ministry of Home Affairs.¹² Its founder, Jalaluddin Rakhmat, is Indonesia's best known Shi'a leader and intellectual and now serves as a member of parliament for the Indonesian Democratic Struggle Party (Partai Demokrasi Indonesia Perjuangan, PDIP).¹³ Initially IJABI claimed to represent all Shi'a in Indonesia, but splinters inevitably emerged. By its own estimates, it has some two million members in 2016 with some 200 branches in all provinces except Jambi and West Papua.¹⁴

A year after IJABI was established, another, much smaller group, the Organisation of Ahlulbayt for Social Support and Education (OASE), was founded by Emilia Renita Az. Emilia was born in the U.S., daughter of an Indonesia Muslim father and a mother whose family came to the U.S. as refugees from Hitler's Germany. She was raised in Indonesia as a non-Muslim. She began studying Islam while a graduate student in Berkeley, California in the 1990s because her dying father asked her to, and eventually converted, only to become disillusioned with Islam after the 1998 riots in Jakarta. In early 2000, she began studying again and converted back to Islam, only this time to Shi'ism, because "only the Shi'a could give satisfying answers to all my questions."¹⁵ She established OASE as a non-governmental organisation in 2001 and shortly thereafter married Jalaluddin. OASE then became the women's wing of IJABI and Emilia became IJABI's secretary-general.

Jalaluddin and Emilia initially followed the *marja'* of Lebanese Grand Ayatullah Hussein Fadlallah, often called Hezbollah's spiritual leader, because he was considered more open-minded and less political than other leading Shi'a clerics and also because he lived in a country that like Indonesia was overwhelmingly Sunni.¹⁶ Although he had been known in the past for his strong anti-US and anti-Israeli sentiments and support of suicide bombing, he had grown more progressive in the early 2000s, especially on women's rights. At the time, Fadlallah seemed like a good fit for the pragmatist couple from Indonesia.

11 Zulkifli, op.cit, pp. 96-98.

12 In early 1990s, a Shi'a organisation called Majelis Ahlul Bait di Indonesia (MAHDI) applied to register but in the end withdrew the application because of disagreements between its two leading figures, Ahmad Baragbah and Jalaluddin Rakhmat over the nature of the organisation. For more on MAHDI, see Umar Faruk Assegaf, "A Quest for Social Recognition in the Post-Suharto Era (1998-2008)" in Formichi and Feener, op.cit.

13 Born in Bandung in 1949, Jalal came from an NU family, although his father later joined the Darul Islam insurgency in West Java. As a student he was active in the reformist Persatuan Islam (Persis) organisation and was trained as a Muhammadiyah preacher at Darul Arqam, Bandung. He also received a Fulbright fellowship to study at Iowa State University where he received a degree in communication. He converted to Shi'ism after attending an international Islamic conference in Colombo in 1984, where he met Iranian clerics. From 1992 to 1993, Jalal and his family lived in Qom, Iran and studied with some of the most respected Shi'ite ulama. See Zulkifli, op.cit, pp. 197-198.

14 IPAC interview with IJABI official, 15 March 2016. He noted, "When IJABI was established, mass organisations law required that we have branches in at least 50 per cent plus one of the number of provinces, districts, and sub-districts. Right now we have 31 provincial branches and in each province we cover at least half the districts and subdistricts. But in some provinces like West Java we have branches in 75 per cent of all the districts and subdistricts. So you can say there are thousands of IJABI activists".

15 IPAC interview with Emilia, Jakarta, 14 January 2016.

16 IPAC interview with Emilia, Jakarta, 14 January 2016. See also Umar Faruk Assegaf, "A Quest for Social Recognition in the Post-Suharto Era (1998-2008)" in Formichi and Feener, op.cit.

From the beginning, IJABI prided itself as a “non-political, non-sectarian” organisation that prioritised ethics and good behavior (*akhlaq*) over strict adherence to *fiqh* in what can be seen as an application of *taqiyah*: hiding one’s true faith when necessary.¹⁷ In practice, this means that members are allowed to worship like Sunnis when they are among Sunnis for the sake of maintaining good relations (*ukhuwah*).¹⁸ IJABI downplays links to Iran and some members have been penalised for allegedly following the late Ayatollah Khomeini’s political fatwas. In 2003, for example, some IJABI branch leaders were expelled from their positions after organising a “Jerusalem Day” (*Yaum al-Quds*) protest – a tradition established by Khomeini in 1979 to hold a protest in support of Palestine on the last Friday of Ramadan. IJABI considered the protest a violation to its non-political principle.

From the beginning, one group of Shi’a had been reluctant to join IJABI. These were the *sayyids*, those who claimed direct descent from the Prophet. Many were Qom alumni and were generally also the most committed to strict application of Shi’a jurisprudence. They did not support the decision of Jalaluddin, who was not a *sayyid*, to base IJABI’s decision-making on democratic principles; they subscribed to Khomeini’s more authoritarian concept of leadership (*wilayat al-faqih*) that gives guardianship of the state to a high-ranking jurist or scholar, often a *sayyid*.¹⁹

After holding their own meetings for many years, the *sayyids* decided to establish their own mass organisation, and registered Ahlul Bait Indonesia (ABI) with the Ministry of Home Affairs in 2010. While dominated by sayyids, ABI also includes non-sayyids in some strategic positions. Today it is headed by Hasan Daliel, and has 87 branches in 23 provinces.²⁰ It is more political than IJABI and more likely to follow *fatwa* from Iran and Iranian-style rituals. These differences came out in 2011 when both observed Ashura, the most important Shi’a holy day. IJABI performed a Karbala play in the Sundanese language, thereby stressing local content, whereas ABI’s commemoration was described by one IJABI member as “very Husseinian”, or very similar to Iranian practice.²¹

Meanwhile, Jalaluddin and Emilia were growing apart over differences in their interpretation of *marja’*.²² In 2010, Sheikh Fadlallah died. They initially intended to emulate his son but he proved to be less progressive than his father. Emilia was especially outraged when the young Fadlallah imposed a new rule that his female students must sit at the back. Jalaluddin turned to Khamenei in Iran, while Emilia shifted to the more puritan *marja’* of Shadiq Shirazi, who divides his time between Qom and Najaf, Iraq.²³ Eventually, IJABI and OASE broke apart over these differences, and Jalaluddin and Emilia also divorced in October 2015.

IJABI and ABI have drawn closer since the break-up because both disagree with OASE’s approach and both are concerned that OASE’s growing militancy will be used as a pretext by anti-Shi’a groups to intensify attacks.²⁴

17 IJABI, “Tentang Kami”, ijabi.or.id.

18 Among the differences in Shi’a and Sunni praying are that Shi’a allow the combining of two prayers, so they can pray three times a day instead of five, while Sunnis only allow combining in special circumstances, for example, while traveling. Sunnis touch their heads to the floor during prostration while Shi’a use a tablet made of Karbala clay to rest their heads.

19 IPAC interview with current IJABI leader, Bandung, 18 January 2016. IJABI founder Jalaluddin Rakhmat argues that there are no objective criteria by which to select a *wali al-faqih* or even to select members of the ulama council who will appoint the *wali*.

20 IPAC interview with ABI’s Secretary General, Jakarta, 24 December 2015.

21 IPAC interview with IJABI leader, Bandung, 15 March 2016.

22 IPAC interview with Emilia, Jakarta, 14 January 2016.

23 In particular, Emilia points to three main differences between *marja’* Shirazi and that of Khamenei: it does not acknowledge Khamenei’s political status as *wali al-al faqih*; it prohibits the practice of *taqiyah* even when one’s life is in danger; and it does not support Khamenei’s *taqrib al-madzahib* (the bringing together of madzhab) project if it entails the sacrificing of *fiqh* for good relations. For OASE, therefore, a true *ukhuwah* has to be based on honesty and transparency, and not on covering up one’s belief. IPAC interview with Emilia, Jakarta, 14 January 2016.

24 IPAC interview with ABI’s Secretary General, Jakarta, 24 December 2015.

III. THE IMPACT OF THE IRANIAN REVOLUTION

The modern history of anti-Shi'ism in Indonesia starts with the 1979 Iranian revolution. It made a deep impact on politically active Muslims in Indonesia, Sunni and Shi'a alike. It inspired a kind of religious revivalism among university students; for some, it offered a blueprint to wage an Islamic revolution at home. It led to conversions to Shi'ism, an expansion of Shi'ite schools, and a brief outbreak of militant Shi'a-led violence. It also led to an anti-Shi'a backlash. The government, concerned about lessons Indonesians might draw from the successful removal of a dictator, moved to warn people against Shi'ism and step up surveillance of those considered sympathetic to the revolution. Some Sunni organisations also reacted by refuting Shi'a doctrine and suggesting it was heretical, and Saudi Arabia sought to counter Iranian influence by funding the publication of anti-Shi'a materials in Indonesian. Some of the fault-lines visible in Indonesia today can be traced back to the ferment that followed the revolution.

A. *Exporting Revolution*

The slogan for the Iranian revolution "Neither East nor West, Islamic Republic!" found fertile ground in Indonesia, particularly on university campuses. Many Sunni activists were involved in the distribution of the Iranian embassy's newsletter *Yaumul Quds* – including some who went on to become known as anti-Shi'a clerics.²⁵ Writings of Iranian intellectuals such as Ali Shariati and Murtaza Mutahhari were quickly translated into Indonesian, and a new pride in being Muslim was evident among many young Indonesians.

The revolution opened up new contacts between Iran and Indonesia. One person who benefited was Habib Husein Al-Habsyi, founder of Indonesia's largest Shi'ite school, Foundation for Islamic Education (Yayasan Pendidikan Islam, YAPI), in Bangil, East Java. Habib Husein was originally a Sunni who had been an activist of Masyumi, Indonesia's first Islamic party that was banned in 1960. After studying in Saudi Arabia and Yemen and teaching for several years in Indonesia, he built YAPI on its current site in 1976.²⁶ It is not clear exactly when he converted, but he had been attracted to Shi'ism as early as the 1960s.²⁷

After Khomeini took power, Habib Husein reached out to Iranian ulama. In 1982, the Khomeini government sent three clerics, Ayatollah Ibrahim Amini, Ayatollah Masduqi and Hujjat al-Islam Mahmudi, to Indonesia to meet with him and other local religious leaders. They agreed to facilitate Indonesian students to study in Iran and entrusted Habib Husein with the selection process. He returned the visit in 1983 and came back with new zeal, to the point that a dozen Sunni teachers at YAPI resigned, saying that he was trying to convert students by offering them scholarships. One of the teachers, Ahmad bin Hussein Assegaf, went on to study in Saudi Arabia and returned, deeply anti-Shi'a, to join a rival pesantren in Bangil that had been set up to challenge YAPI.²⁸ He also established Majelis Ta'lim ASWAJA Bangil, an NU-Muhammadiyah study group dedicated to eradicating Shi'ism.²⁹

In 1987 YAPI got two new students, brothers from Sampang, Madura whose father, Kiai Makmun, a well-known cleric there, had converted to Shi'ism after the Iranian revolution.³⁰

25 Interview with Muhammad Baharun, Jakarta, 15 January 2016. Baharun, an MUI member who has written several anti-Shi'a books, was one of these activists.

26 Zulkifli, *op.cit.*, pp. 55-56.

27 Chiara Formichi, "One Big Family? Dynamics of Interaction among the 'Lovers of Ahl al Bayt' in Modern Java" in Formichi and Feener, *op.cit.*

28 IPAC interview with Abdul Qodir Assegaf, son of Ahmad Assegaf, Bangil, 4 January 2016.

29 IPAC interview with a kiai of ASWAJA, Bangil, 4 January 2016.

30 Because he never practiced in public, some locals believed he never actually converted but was merely sympathetic to Shi'ism. See Mohammad Iqbal Ahnaf, Samsul Maarif, Budi Asyhari-Afwan and Muhammad Afdillah, *Politik Lokal dan Konflik Keagamaan*, Program Studi Agama dan Lintas Budaya, February 2015, p.18

The boys had been studying at a Sunni school, run by their relative, a conservative NU kiai named Ali Karrar. The father's decision to send his sons to study at YAPI, by this time known as a Shi'ite school, was immediately criticised by Ali Karrar, who demanded that the boys continue their studies with him. The roots of violent Sunni-Shi'a conflict in Sampang that erupted some 25 years later lie in part in the personal hostility of Ali Karrar toward one of the brothers, Tajul Muluk, who went on to become a popular Shi'a preacher.

By late 1980s, the first generation of students had come back and established schools that are today part of a network of hundreds of schools and educational foundations founded by Qom alumni. The expansion of Shi'a schools alarmed many in Sunni civil society, both traditionalist and reformist.³¹

Government uneasiness over the impact of the revolution remained high. In 1984, the government-controlled Council of Indonesian Ulama (Majelis Ulama Indonesia, MUI) released a *taushiyah* or advisory against "Shi'ite Ideology", which outlined five differences between Sunnism and Shi'ism, including that "Shi'a view the establishment of leadership/government (*imamah*) as a pillar of the faith, while Sunnis see it as a means of upholding public interests."³²

At this point Indonesian enthusiasm for the revolution still seemed to be more intellectual than operational. But that changed after three bombings, in December 1984 when a Catholic church and seminary in Malang were damaged on Christmas Eve; in January 1985, when nine stupas at the newly restored Borobodur temple were hit; and in March 1985, when a bomb on a bus from Banyuwangi, East Java to Bali exploded prematurely, killing seven passengers.³³ The perpetrators turned out to be Shi'a militants. One, Husein Ali Al-Habsyi, a blind preacher, had been a student of Habib Husein and had started a religious study group (*taklim*) at his home in Malang in 1983 that focused on the need for a Khomeini-style revolution.³⁴ A second, Ibrahim Jawad, had just come back from his studies after a year in Iran and become a teacher at Husein's *taklim*, further radicalising Husein and some of the students. He reproduced Khomeini's anti-American and anti-Zionist views and insisted that Islam could only win by the sword, not through democratic change. Husein was eventually arrested in 1990; Jawad, who appears to have learned bomb making skills in Iran, was never found, and some suggested he fled to Iran.³⁵ It turned out that Husein and Ibrahim Jawad had taken part in discussions with Sunni militants inspired by Iran about how to overthrow the Suharto government.³⁶

The bombings led both the Indonesian security and conservative Sunnis to identify Shi'ism with violence and with Iran's attempt to export its revolution, views which are held to this day.³⁷ In 2011, As'ad Ali, then deputy head of the State Intelligence Agency (Badan Intelijen Negara,

31 Traditionalists embrace an Islam that is rooted in local culture and traditions; Nahdlatul Ulama is the largest and best known of the traditionalist organisations. Reformists were inspired by the Islamic reform movement of Egyptian Muhammad Abduh in the 20th century that sought to bring Islam in harmony with modern life through returning to the Qur'an and hadith. Muhammadiyah is the largest reformist organisation in Indonesia; others include Islamic Union (Persatuan Islam, Persis) and al-Irsyad. With respect to Habib Husein, opposition was particularly strong from Persis leaders who had clashed with him in the past over doctrine. On the traditionalist side, Habib Husein's main opponents included his former colleagues and fellow Sayyids at a school in Bondowoso, East Java, where he used to teach.

32 MUI, "Faham Syiah", 7 March 1984, available on <http://konawe.kemenag.go.id/file/dokumen/FahamSyiah.pdf>.

33 Solahudin, *Dari NII Sampai Ji: Salafi Jihadisme di Indonesia*, (Jakarta, 2011), p. 188-191.

34 "Verdict in case of Abdul Kadir Ali al-Habsyi, Case No.2/PTS/Pid.B/PN Malang", 24 March 1986.

35 International Crisis Group, "Al-Qaeda in Southeast Asia: The Ngruki Network", Indonesia Briefing, 8 August 2002, p.15.

36 Solahudin, op. cit., pp.184-187 and International Crisis Group, "Recycling Militants in Indonesia: Darul Islam and the Australian Embassy Bombing," Asia Report No.92, 22 February 2005. Also arrested for having provided the explosives for the Borobodur bombing was Abdul Qadir Baraja, then a teacher at the Ngruki pesantren in Solo and a relative of Abu Bakar Ba'asyir's wife, who always maintained that while he did indeed buy the materials at the request of Husein Ali Al-Habsyi, he did not know how they would be used.

37 In 1986 the Indonesian National Institute of Science (LIPI) published a report entitled "Shi'ism in Iranian Revolution", which depicts Shi'ism as a radical movement with a tendency to revolt against the legitimate government. See Muhammad Hisyam, *Syiah dalam Revolusi Iran* (Jakarta, 1986).

BIN), wrote that Indonesian Shi'a are now "trying to establish what is called *marja' al-taqlid* [source of emulation], a highly centralised religious leadership consisting of prominent Shi'ite ulama that would have the full authority to form an Islamic government and constitution... including forming a military wing called *maktab* or *lajnah asykariyah*."³⁸

B. Saudi Arabia and the Salafis in the 1980s

At the same time that the Iranian revolution was causing concern in government circles, it was triggering a reaction in Saudi-supported Salafi circles. Chief among the Salafi-influenced groups was Dewan Dakwah Islamiyah Indonesia (DDII), an organisation established in 1967 by Muhammad Natsir, the former leader of Masyumi. DDII's link to Saudi was clear: it served as the Indonesian representative of Rabitah Alam Islami (World Muslim League), the Mecca-based organisation dedicated to strengthening Saudi Arabia's cultural and religious influence in the Muslim world through the propagation of Wahhabism.³⁹

DDII's *da'wah* agenda was related as much to Saudi Arabia's geopolitical interests as to the local context. In the 1960s and 1970s when the Saudi leadership was preoccupied with curtailing the influence of Gamal Abdul Nasser's "Arab Socialism", DDII focused on combating Communism in Indonesia, just as Soeharto was purging the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI).⁴⁰ Once Nasserism failed, the Iranian revolution threatened Saudi Arabia's supremacy as the leader of the Islamic world. The Saudi government began to use various charity organisations to curtail Iranian influence by supporting anti-Shia campaigns, and DDII soon adopted this agenda. One scholar writes:

No doubt encouraged by their Saudi and Kuwaiti sponsors,[DDII] polemicized against Shi'ism as a fatal deviation from Islam and published an unending series of anti-Shi'a tracts and books. Their activities appeared to be focused increasingly on perceived threats: threats from within (Shi'a, Islamic liberalism) as well as threats from without: the Christian and Jewish threats to the world of Islam.⁴¹

In 1982, DDII's monthly magazine, *Media Dakwah*, published what appears to be its first anti-Iran/anti-Shi'a article entitled "Iran Ready to Wage Ideological Invasion". In explaining the threat of Khomeini's Shi'ism to Muslim countries, the article argued that the *imamah* doctrine propagated by Khomeini entailed an expansionist ambition to "conquer the entire Islamic world [and] rule over the entire 900-million population of Muslims in the world".⁴²

The anti-Shi'a campaign during this period was characterised by intellectual challenges to Shi'a doctrines, often by distorting them in a way designed to incite fear and hatred among Sunnis. The focus on the imminent danger of revolution may have reflected Saudi support, but it was also a way that DDII could present itself as a "friend" of the government in the context of Soeharto's wariness of Islamic movements. DDII was established as a non-political movement precisely to avoid the fate of its predecessor, the Masyumi party. The 1990s saw the campaign change into more direct political lobbying for a ban on Shi'ism.

38 As'ad Ali, "Gerakan Syiah di Indonesia," www.nu.or.id, 30 May 2011.

39 Noorhaidi Hasan, *Laskar Jihad: Islam, Militancy, and the Quest for Identity in Post-New Order Indonesia*, Dissertation, Leiden University, 2005, p. 32.

40 Hasan, *op.cit.*, p. 32-33.

41 Martin van Bruinessen, "Genealogies of Islamic Radicalism in post-Suharto Indonesia," paper prepared for the international colloquium "L'islam politique à l'aube du XXIème siècle" organized in Tehran on 28-29 October 2001, updated July 2002, p.8.

42 Amir Taheri, "Iran Siap Mengadakan Penyerbuan Teologis," *Media Dakwah* No. 96 June 1982.

IV. THE CAMPAIGN IN THE 1990S

Anti Shi'a interests of the Salafis, reformists (Persis, Al-Irsyad, Muhammadiyah), and Nahdlatul Ulama converged in the 1990s.⁴³ A conservative wing of NU decided to use anti-Shi'a sentiment to promote its political interests during a 1994 leadership conference, and Salafis saw the opportunity for a new alliance. The anti-Shi'a campaign also gathered steam from a scandal widely covered in the Indonesian media involving sexual relations between a Sragen school teacher and underage girls that he claimed was allowed by the Shi'a concept of "contract marriage" (*nikah mut'ah*). The scandal was quickly picked up as evidence of religious deviance. In 1997, a group of reformist and Salafi ulama convened a national anti-Shi'a seminar at Jakarta's central mosque, Masjid Istiqlal. Attended by top figures from all Indonesia's major Muslim organisations, it concluded with a call for the government to ban Shi'ism.

A. The Anti-Gus Dur Campaign

The anti-Shi'a movement within NU surfaced in 1993 as a minor issue between the organisation's progressive and conservative wings. Abdurrahman Wahid (Gus Dur), head of the progressives, had been head of NU since 1984. Elected with backing from the Soeharto government then, he had fallen out with it a decade later, and the government made a concerted effort to depose him, backing the conservative candidate, Abu Hasan.

The Abu Hasan faction accused Gus Dur of being pro-Israel and pro-Christian, and somewhat secondarily, pro-Shi'a. Gus Dur, who had studied in the late sixties in what was then an open, tolerant Baghdad, had many Christian, Shi'a and Jewish friends, was deeply interested in developments in Iran after the revolution and had made several trips there. In 1987, he outraged some conservatives by claiming that "NU is culturally Shi'a."⁴⁴ He was referring to many traditional NU practices, such as visiting graves, that Shi'a also practice, but the remark was used as evidence of his pro-Shi'a leanings. Despite the intimidation and a government-supported campaign called Anyone but Gus Dur (ABG), he won by a thin margin and his popularity among the rank-and-file was never in doubt.

In late November 1995, NU leaders organised a reconciliation meeting at a pesantren in East Java. One of the many issues raised by Gus Dur's opponents was his alleged recognition of Ayatollah Khomeini as *wali* (a saint). Gus Dur acknowledged that there were doctrinal differences between Shi'a and Sunni and said that he recognised Khomeini not for his religious leadership but for his social and political accomplishments.⁴⁵

Said Aqil Siradj, a Gus Dur supporter who was then the Deputy Secretary of NU's ruling Religious Council, became a particular target of attack. On 21 December 1995, Hamid Baidlowi – NU conservative, supporter of Abu Hasan and later the co-founder of the National Anti-Shi'a Alliance – and eleven prominent traditional leaders (*kiai*) signed a petition demanding that Said Aqil be fired from his position for expressing pro-Shi'a attitudes and for criticising the concept

43 Al-Irsyad is an organisation for non-Sayyid Arab descendants founded in 1914 in opposition to the predominantly Sayyid organisation called Jama'at Khair (established in 1901). Both Al-Irsyad and Jami'at Khair run school networks around Indonesia.

44 Chiara Formichi, "Violence, Sectarianism, and the Politics of Religion: Articulations of Anti-Shi'a Discourses in Indonesia", *Indonesia*, vol. 98 (2014), pp. 1-27.

45 "Bertemu Gus Dur di Zainul Hasan", *Gatra*, 25 November 1995, <https://www.library.ohiou.edu/indopubs/1995/11/23/0022.html>.

of Ahlussunnah wal Jamaah (Aswaja) as crafted by Hasyim Asy'ari, NU's founder. ⁴⁶One of the signatories was Bashori Alwi, whose son Luthfi emerges more than a decade later as a prominent anti-Shi'a leader in Malang.⁴⁷

Abu Hasan's short-lived challenge to Gus Dur took place as tensions in East Java were rising, especially over YAPI founder Habib Husein Al-Habsyi's efforts to promote Shi'ism.⁴⁸ Adding fuel to the fire was the sensationalised reporting about contract marriages, prompted by the schoolteacher scandal.⁴⁹ Shi'a were rumoured to lure young people into converting because *nikah mut'ah* served as religious justification for free sex.⁵⁰ The scandal prompted MUI to issue a fatwa against *nikah mut'ah* in 1996 and Salafis used anger over the issue to organise discussions across the country, with a particularly high profile debate in 1994 between Jalaluddin Rakhmat and Salafi leader Said Abdussamad at Hasanudin University in Makassar, a city that had seen a rise in Shi'ite recruitment in universities and high schools.⁵¹

B. The 1997 Seminar

In September 1997, a huge anti-Shi'a gathering called National Seminar on Shi'ism (*Seminar Nasional Tentang Syi'ah*) was held at Jakarta's Istiqlal Mosque. Organised by the Saudi-supported Islamic Research and Assessment Institute (Lembaga Penelitian dan Pengkajian Islam, LPPI), it marked the first time that a cross-organisational alliance of ulama demanded that the government officially ban Shi'ism in Indonesia.⁵² In organising the event, LPPI drew on concern over Shi'a expansion, the conversion of NU members (though numbers were never mentioned), and the increase in distribution of Shi'a publications.⁵³ Outrage over *nikah mut'ah*, however, was still the LPPI's strongest anti-Shi'a selling point.

The 1997 seminar was significant for its sheer size. It was attended by 900 participants including top figures of NU, DDII, Persis, and Al-Irsyad. Many NU regional branches reportedly sent representatives.⁵⁴ It was also endorsed by the Soeharto government and remains the highest profile anti-Shi'a gathering ever held in Indonesia. It produced ten recommendations: to ban Shi'ism in Indonesia; investigate books that might contain Shi'ite teachings; close down Shi'ite schools; require all Islamic book publishers to submit a copy of each of their new books to MUI

46 Ahlussunnah wal Jama'ah (often shortened in Indonesia as Aswaja) refers to the followers of the Prophet's methodology. All Sunni groups claim to be Ahlussunnah wal Jama'ah because of a hadith that says that Muslims will be divided into different groups and all will go astray except one: the true followers of the Prophet's tradition and methodology. NU's Aswaja specifically refers to the practice or knowledge of Islam as derived from the jurisprudence of four schools of thought (madzhab) namely Shaf'i, Hanbali, Hanafi, and Maliki, although in reality most NU people follow the Shafi'i school. In terms of creed, it adheres to the teachings of Abu Hasan al-Asy'ari (Ash'ariya) and Abu Mansur al-Maturidi (Maturidiyya), and in terms of Sufism and ethics, it follows Abu Hamid Al-Ghazali and Al-Juwaini Al-Baghdadi. This definition of Aswaja is close to that taught at Al-Azhar University, Egypt and Al-Zaytuna University, Tunisia.

47 A similar protest letter was issued by an NU branch in Pasuruan on 16 January 1996. Both cited a paper that Said Aqil presented at an April 1995 NU youth seminar in which he purportedly called Hasyim Asy'ari's definition of Aswaja "embarrassing for its oversimplification". The paper provided a critical history of Sunnism, with a harsh evaluation of the first three Sunni caliphs and a largely positive assessment of the fourth, the Shi'a Imam, Ali. See *Aula*, March 1996, pp. 15-29.

48 In 1993, some NU *kiai* in Bangil supposedly discovered a hand-written letter from Habib Hussein to an Iranian cleric, reporting his success in converting certain NU leaders. See "Perang Arab di Bangil," *Aula*, September 1993 and "Surat Kepada seseorang di Iran" and "Syiah Sesat dan menyesatkan," *Aula*, November 1993.

49 "Kawinilah Aku, Kau Kukontrak," *Minggu Media Indonesia*, 5 October 1997 and "Pasien Terakhir," *Assabiqunal Awwalun (ASA)*, 5, 1990 in Lembaga Penelitian dan Pengkajian Islam (LPPI), *Mengapa Kita Menolak Syi'ah* (Jakarta, 1998), pp. 270-273.

50 Ibid. The LPPI book quotes the Islamist daily *Republika*, 26 July 1994, as stating that in Iran, *nikah mut'ah* had produced 250,000 children born out of wedlock and 5,000 Iranian with HIV/AIDS because the practice enabled the frequent changing of sexual partners quoting *Republika*, 26 July 1994.

51 Said Abdussamad today is the head of the Makassar branch of LPPI.

52 The idea for the seminar came from Forum Ukhuwah Islamiyah (FUI), a forum established by DDII's Mohammed Natsir. Amin Jamaluddin, the founder of LPPI, worked closely with Natsir on the issue of deviant sects.

53 LPPI, op.cit, pp. 167-171.

54 "Seminar yang bukan ilusi," *Panji Masyarakat*, No. 25, 6 October 1997.

for review; guard against Shi'a infiltration and encroachment in schools and institutions; and reject *nikah mut'ah*. It called on all mass media not to spread Shi'ism; asked the government to prohibit proselytisation by the Iranian embassy; and requested MUI and the Ministry of Religious Affairs to publish books about Shi'a deviancy and its differences with Sunnism.⁵⁵

President Soeharto met some of the participants afterwards at the presidential palace and seemed to take their demands seriously, especially as he was actively wooing Muslim groups at the time. It was one of many examples to come where political leaders exploited anti-minority sentiments for short-term gains. In the end, however, he did not act.⁵⁶

The frequent use of the term Shi'a "infiltration" (*penyusupan Syiah*) both by NU elites, especially in East Java, and by the 1997 seminar participants indicates the nervousness of many in Sunni civil society about perceived Shi'a expansion and what they saw as its covert nature, exemplified by *taqiyah*. Shared anti-Shi'a sentiment facilitated a temporary alliance of the traditionalists and the Salafis, but it did not last long; the mutual suspicions between the two were too high.

VI. DEMOCRACY AND THE ANTI-SHI'A CAMPAIGN

The return of democracy to Indonesia with the fall of Soeharto in 1998 saw the rise of hardline Islamist civil society, including some with Saudi links. The Iranian embassy also expanded its activities, establishing attractive cultural centers and libraries and offering scholarships to Qom, triggering a conservative backlash. Throughout Java, clerics from Nahdlatul Ulama grew increasingly concerned about Shi'a inroads into NU communities, and some politicians played on these fears to win votes, especially after the advent of direct elections for local officials in 2005.

From the outset, however, the Yudhyono government (2004-2014) had also signalled that it would defer to MUI on Islamic matters; that it would not interfere in local religious disputes even when the constitutional rights of minorities were affected; and that it would turn a blind eye to minor violence in defence of religious orthodoxy.⁵⁷ The Ahmadiyah and Christian communities were the first to feel the effects, but Sunni-Shi'a tensions also rose, especially in East Java in 2011 as local, provincial and national elections drew near.

At the same time the Yudhyono government saw close relations with Iran as boosting Indonesia's international leadership role. It rolled out the red carpet for Iranian President Ahmadinejad on a three-day state visit in May 2006. He got a rapturous reception, especially from crowds of students cheering his anti-Israel statements; there was very little in the way of protests. The war in Lebanon in July 2006 also briefly turned Hezbollah and its leader Nasrullah into objects of adulation among young Muslim activists of all persuasions. Saudi-backed Salafis intensified their anti-Shi'a rhetoric in response.

Several new faultlines emerged as democratisation proceeded: between Salafi and Shi'a; and between NU hardliners and Shi'a; and between NU moderates and "Wahhabis". Increasing political space, combined with new communications technologies, enabled alliances to build and change quickly and for international and local developments to become interwoven. Antipathy of NU moderates toward Saudi-supported Wahhabism, especially after Said Aqil took over the NU chairmanship in 2010, gave a new motivation to Salafi activists to use anti-Shi'ism to divide NU and bring the conservative minority over to their side.

55 LPPI, op.cit. p. 169-171.

56 IPAC interview with Luthfi Bashori, Malang, 5 January 2016.

57 Robin Bush, "Religious Politics and Minority Rights during the Yudhyono Presidency", in Edward Aspinall, Marcus Mietzner, and Dirk Tomsa, *The Yudhyono Presidency: Indonesia's Decade of Stability and Stagnation*, (Singapore, 2015), pp. 239-257.

A. *Shi'a-Salafi Differences and the 2006 War in Lebanon*

Between the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003 and the end of the Lebanon war in August 2006, many in the conservative Muslim mainstream seemed to view the activities of Shi'a militants with approval. In 2003, for example, Hidayatullah, a conservative but non-Salafi organisation, praised Shi'a militias in Iraq for standing up to the U.S.⁵⁸ There was no suggestion that Shi'ism was a heresy. Indeed in 2004, a writer for Hidayatullah argued that Shi'a were part of the Muslim community, using the same Qur'an as the Sunnis, and that the Sunni-Shi'a conflict in Iraq was just "divide and conquer politics by the U.S. and the United Kingdom to manufacture a civil war in Iraq".⁵⁹

After the war in Lebanon broke out, Eramuslim (www.erasuslim.com), another conservative site, repeatedly called for Sunni-Shi'a unity in order to defeat Israel in Lebanon. It referred to Shi'ism as a school of law (*madzhab*), calling Shi'a "our fellow Muslims, our brothers in faith and belief".⁶⁰ Islamic websites also published various articles praising Hezbollah and Ahmadinejad's anti-Western rhetoric.⁶¹ In August 2006, a reader posted a question in Eramuslim's Q&A column about Hezbollah. An ustadz responded:

Just because Hezbollah is Shi'a doesn't mean that we can call them non-Muslims. Right now we have to focus on who our common enemies are and how to defeat them...It is evident that Hezbollah is the only group that has done that.⁶²

Many Indonesian Muslims voiced admiration for Hezbollah's success in the 2006 war as well as Ahmadinejad's boldness in confronting America. Shi'a publishers responded with a number of titles that fed into the idolisation. Titles such as *Ahmadinejad: David in the Middle of the Brutality of the World's Goliath* (Ahmadinejad: David di Tengah Angkara Goliath Dunia) sold like hotcakes to university students, many of whom were not even aware of the Sunni-Shi'a division. It was reprinted eight times between August 2006 and May 2007. In an effort to dampen the general enthusiasm, videos went up on Salafi sites explaining to Indonesians that both the Iranian revolution and Hezbollah were Shi'ite creations.⁶³

In this sympathetic climate, Muhammadiyah opened up its universities in 2007 to "Iranian Corners", cultural centres sponsored by the Iranian embassy providing Persian and Arabic language books, Persian language courses, and other learning facilities. Some of the best students also received scholarships to Iran.

The Salafi backlash began to be felt in 2007 and quickly reached into the mainstream. Many of the pro-Shi'a books had been published or promoted by Mizan, Indonesia's largest publisher of Islamic books, whose founder and CEO were Shi'a. Some Sunnis stopped writing for Mizan, saying it had lost its neutrality and had now been emboldened to show its "Shi'iteness".⁶⁴ The Iranian Corners began to be questioned by Muhammadiyah conservatives, who suggested they

58 "AS Minta Iran Tak Campur Tangan Iraq", Hidayatullah.com, 25 April 2003.

59 "Politik Adu Domba Militer Inggris di Iraq", Hidayatullah.com, 25 September 2005.

60 Ahmad Mahmud, "Siapa Hizbullah Sebenarnya?", Eramuslim.com, 1 August 2006.

61 "Pemimpin Indonesia Perlu Contoh Ahmadinejad Atasi Tekanan AS", Eramuslim.com, 9 May 2006; "Ayatullah Khamenei: Mimpi Israel Kuasai Libanon, Takkan Pernah Terwujud", Eramuslim.com 17 July 2006; "Dr Yusuf Qardhawi: Wajib Hukumannya Dukung Hizbullah Lawan Zionis", Eramuslim.com, 28 July 2006.

62 "Siapa Hizbullah Sebenarnya", Eramuslim.com, 1 August 2006.

63 See for example http://wapmon.com/videos/view/GV_zUjd2JkE/Syiah-dibalik-Revolusi-Iran-Bagian-5.html and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zXGwYS2DeGM>.

64 IPAC interview with a former author of Mizan, Bandung, 20 February 2016.

were a tool to convert Muhamamadiyah youth to Shi'ism.⁶⁵ Hardline websites also pulled back. Having been criticised for its overly positive views of Shi'ism, Eramuslim changed tack and could write in October 2008:

Shi'a are not part of the Muslim *ummah* and they are not part of the Islamic world.⁶⁶

From 2009 onwards, none of the websites expressed any sympathy toward Shi'a, and Ahmadinejad went from hero to being branded a descendant of Jews.⁶⁷ Salafi clerics, in a rapidly growing online media network, focused on how Shi'ite doctrine differed from the "true" Islam.

B. A Few Jihadis Take Notice

While Salafi scholars were preoccupied with opposing Shi'ism, most salafi jihadis in Indonesia paid little attention. Their enemies were Christians, as in Ambon and Poso after 1999 and 2000 respectively; foreigners, as with the attacks on soft targets in Bali and Jakarta in 2002, 2004, 2005 and 2009; and after 2010, police. Shi'a were not on their hit list.

In a way it was not surprising because Salafis and salafi jihadis were mutually hostile, despite sharing some basic doctrinal tenets. The Saudi-oriented Salafis leading the anti-Shi'a charge regarded jihadi groups like Jemaah Islamiyah as extremists, (*khawaij*, referring to an early Islamic sect), and some of the most vitriolic diatribes against JI came from Salafi scholars.⁶⁸ Jihadis saw the Salafis as *murji'ah*, literally procrastinators, who sat around doing nothing to defend fellow Muslims.

But there was an exception that proved the rule, and this was a veteran Darul Islam leader, Abu Umar, who may well have picked up his anti-Shi'ism from Salafi associates. Wanted by police for an attack in 2000 on a government official, he had fled Jakarta but moved back to nearby Bogor in 2005, where he began helping rebuild the DI cell structure. He also seems to have developed a close relationship with a Bogor-based Salafi organisation called Sunni Movement for the Muslim Community (Harakah Sunniyyah Untuk Masyarakat Islami, HASMI). In 2008, Abu Umar took over leadership of the Jakarta DI structure and began holding religious discussions where he taught members that the enemies of Islam were Israel, America, the Liberal Islam Network (Jaringan Islam Liberal, JIL, a group of young progressive scholars), government tyrants, police and Shi'a.⁶⁹

Abu Umar also encouraged members, few of whom had deep religious knowledge, to attend lectures led by Salafi clerics, including Farid Okbah, already known in Salafi circles for his anti-Shi'a rhetoric.⁷⁰ In June 2011 Abu Umar attended a seminar at DDII headquarters in central Jakarta entitled "Muslims Stand United Against Shi'ism" at which a list of Shi'a institutions and leaders, complete with addresses, was distributed. Shortly thereafter, Abu Umar ordered his men to do a survey of the Jakarta-based schools on the list, with the intention of carrying out an attack. All were arrested before any violence took place, but it is the first known instance of

65 These conservatives included Yunahar Ilyas, Bachtiar Nasir, and Fahmi Salim. Yunahar Ilyas, a graduate of Ibnu Saud University in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, is a former leader of Muhammadiyah and MUI; he was the main author of the MUI book *Recognising and Being Watchful of Shi'a Deviance in Indonesia* (Mengenal dan Mewaspadaai Penyimpangan Syi'ah di Indonesia). Bachtiar Nasir (Medina University alumnus) and Fahmi Salim are the leading figures of the Indonesian Council for Young Ulama and Intellectuals (MIUMI), an alliance of conservative ulama from NU, Muhammadiyah, and Salafi organisations.

66 "Beberapa Pertanyaan (3)," Eramuslim.com, 15 November 2008.

67 "Koran Inggris Sebut Ahmadinejad Keturunan Yahudi," Hidayatullah.com, 5 October 2009.

68 International Crisis Group, "Why Salafism and Terrorism Mostly Don't Mix," Asia Report No. 83, 13 September 2004.

69 Trial dossier of Sugiharto.

70 There was no suggestion that Farid Okbah himself advocated violence; in fact he was known for pulling some would-be jihadis back toward a "pure" Salafi path. His ability to do so stemmed in part from the fact that he had briefly trained in Afghanistan with Jemaah Islamiyah.

jihadists targeting Shi'a.

The seminar that inspired Abu Umar was one of many anti-Shi'a discussions taking place around Jakarta that brought together Saudi-linked Salafi scholars, reformist groups like Persis, hardline civil society organisations, and conservative traditionalists, mostly from NU-East Java . All but the latter were also active in the anti-Ahmadiyah campaign, which had peaked the same year with the clubbing to death of three Ahmadis in Cikeusik, West Java – an example of what hatred spawned by claims of religious deviance could produce.⁷¹

C. NU vs the “Wahhabis”

Salafis had always viewed NU traditionalists as imperfect Muslims at best, idolaters at worst. They disparaged many activities as unacceptable innovations (*bid'ah*) that were never sanctioned by the Prophet or his Companions, including visiting graves (*ziarah*), recitation of a particular prayer for the dead (*tahlilan*), and celebration of the Prophet's birthday (*Maulid*). As early as 1993, as noted above, they had also accused a senior NU leader, Said Aqil Siraj, of being a Shi'a.

In 2010, Said Aqil took over as chairman of NU and launched a bitter campaign against Wahhabism, accusing it of being the gateway to terrorism. He endorsed and wrote the preface for an anti-Wahhabi trilogy of books by an NU author using the pen name “ Syaikh Idahram ” which prompted a detailed rejoinder from the Salafis.⁷² In a 2011 seminar on deradicalisation, Said Aqil accused twelve Salafi foundations of being breeding grounds for radicalisation.⁷³ With a very few exceptions, however, Indonesian Salafis in fact very rarely crossed over into terrorism. Nevertheless, it was popular in many quarters, including those interested in drawing attention to Saudi Arabia's support for sectarianism, to see linkages between the two. The Salafis in return accused Said Aqil of taking money from Iran to become its mouthpiece in Indonesia.⁷⁴

This dispute may have given Salafi leaders a strong motivation to divide NU by building an alliance with NU conservatives who felt threatened by Shi'ite schools in Central and East Java.

VI. VIOLENCE IN CENTRAL AND EAST JAVA

Incidents of anti-Shi'a violence have periodically erupted in Java since Soeharto fell, mostly originating in very local competitions between Sunni and Shi'ite schools which are then exploited by broader political interests. Most involve a local *kiai* being accused of Shi'ism and then challenged by local NU leaders, only to have outside organisations with more ideological motives coming in to take up the cause.

One such incident in 2000 near Pekalongan, Central Java, began with a local protest against

71 Like some of the anti-Shi'a activity in East Java, the anti-Ahmadiyah campaign was driven by a combination of Salafi zeal and funding and local political interests. NU took a largely tolerant view of the Ahmadiyah community though rejecting its teachings. But no NU group felt that Ahmadis were encroaching on their membership the way some of the East Java conservatives saw the Shi'a.

72 The three books were: *The Bloody History of Salafi Wahhabi Sect* (Sejarah Berdarah Sekte Salafi Wahhabi); *They Forged the Classical Ulama Books* (Mereka Memalsukan Kitab-kitab Karya Ulama Klasik); *World-Wide Ulama Criticised Salafi Wahhabism* (Ulama Sejagad Menggugat Salafi Wahabi). A popular Salafi ustadz, Firanda Andirja, countered Idahram's arguments in his book *Sejarah Berdarah Sekte Syiah: Membongkar Koleksi Duta Syaikh Idahram*.

73 He specifically referred to the as-Sofwa Foundation, which had been the home some years earlier of extremist cleric Aman Abdurrahman, later expelled for his militancy and today one of the leading promoters of ISIS. He also cited the as-Sunnah foundation in Cirebon, West Java. In 2011, two alumni, Muhammad Syarif and Ahmad Yosefa, bombed the Cirebon police mosque and a Christian church in Solo respectively. “Masyaallah 12 Yayasan Ini Dituduh PBNU Sebagai Salafi Wahabi Penebar Teror,” *Voa-islam.com*, 6 December 2011.

74 Salafis and the Garis Lurus group uncovered a tract by NU founder, Hasyim Asy'ari, which labelled Shi'a as unwarranted innovators (*ahli bid'ah*) and used the term against Said Aqil. “KH Hasyim Asy'ari tentang Syiah , nahimunkar.com, 19 January 2012.

the plans of a prominent local Shi'a cleric, Ahmad Baragbah, to expand his school, Pesantren al-Hadi.⁷⁵ The school's students had grown from just five in 1989 to over 100 ten years later.⁷⁶ Determined to curb his influence, local conservatives began inviting anti-Shi'a preachers to the area for public lectures. One of these was Ahmad Thohir Alkaf. A former student of Habib Husein, Thohir had returned in 1986 from his studies in Mecca deeply opposed to Shi'ism and helped establish the al-Bayyinat organisation to defend traditional Sunnism.⁷⁷ When the news of its proposed expansion spread, the school began receiving threats and on 3 April 2000, the Batang prosecutor's office, under pressure from the Sunni community, banned further construction.⁷⁸ On 14 April 2000, one day before Ashura, a huge mob armed with with rocks, sickles, and machetes came on trucks from neighbouring villages and began attacking the building and the students guarding it. Police had ample warning that mass action was imminent but only managed to disperse the mob by evening. Suggestions were rife that Thohir Alkaf was behind the attackers, but there was not enough evidence to prosecute.⁷⁹

The most high-profile case, however, took place in Madura.

A. Sampang

Tajul Muluk, the young Madurese student whose father sent him to study at YAPI in 1987, became the target of anti-Shi'a activists after 2004. He had returned to Madura in 1999 after six years studying and working in Saudi Arabia. He became a popular preacher, winning new converts to Shi'ism and the traditional NU *kiai*, most of whom were members of the Association of Pesantren-Based Ulama in Madura, (Badan Silaturahmi Ulama Pesantren Madura, BASSRA), grew alarmed.⁸⁰

It was not just the doctrinal differences that worried them but an egalitarianism that Tajul introduced that threatened to undermine their traditional social and economic standing.⁸¹ Until 2004, when Tajul opened a pesantren called Misbahul Huda, local opposition had been fairly subdued, in part out of respect for Tajul's father, a revered *kiai*. When his father died later that year, however, the anti-Shi'a offensive began in earnest, under the leadership of Ali Karrar, the same man who had tried to stop Tajul from going to YAPI in 1987 and who was now head of BASSRA. Karrar published a pamphlet entitled "29 Deviations in Tajul's Teaching".⁸² These included mocking the Prophet's wife and Companions, changing the contents of Qur'an (*tahrif*), having revolutionary aspirations that endangered the unity of the republic, legalising prostitution through *nikah mut'ah*, requiring people to pray only three times a day rather than five, and

75 Ahmad Baragbah was one of the first students sent by Habib Husein to Iran. He established al-Hadi in 1989.

76 "Muslim Syiah di Sisi Utara Jawa Tengah: Transformasi Kultural Komunitas Ahlul Bait di Pekalongan, Semarang, dan Jepara," *Elsa Online*, 20 September 2014, available on <http://jurnal.elsaonline.com/?p=7>.

77 "Imam Besar Syiah Diadili Muridnya", <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zCYRc3xpkEw>.

78 Kejaksaan Negeri Batang issued the letter 38/Dsb.I/4/2000 to ban the construction. IPAC interview with an alumnus of al-Hadi, Jakarta, February 2016 and 'Pesantren Beralirab Syiah Dirusak Masa,' *Siar*, 18 April 2000.

79 Much later, Thohir tried to translate his anti-Shi'a stance into political influence in Tegal, Central Java, a predominantly NU city, by backing the mayor, Ikmal Jaya, for a second term in 2013. He reportedly promised Ikmal the support of thousands of his followers in exchange for Ikmal's promise to ban Shi'a dakwah activities if re-elected. But both seem to have badly misread the extent of support for the anti-Shi'a offensive. It generated a backlash from NU youth groups, human rights NGOs and at least one prominent member of MUI Tegal, and in the end Ikmal lost. See "Disesalkan, Munculnya Surat Edaran Walkot," *Radar Tegal*, 16 May 2011.

80 Founded in 1991, BASSRA was only sporadically active but used its political clout when the need arose. During the late New Order, it had been an important get-out-the-vote machine for the United Development Party (Partai Persatuan Pembangunan, PPP), a hybrid Muslim party with a strong NU component. It had also been a powerful lobby, mobilising local resistance to giant infrastructure projects on the grounds that they would bring vice and immorality into Madura. See Yanwar Pribadi, *Islam and Politics in Madura: Ulama and Other Local Leaders in Search of Influence* (1990-2010), Dissertation, Leiden University, 2013, p. 74.

81 Ahnaf et al, *Politik Lokal dan Konflik Keagamaan*, op.cit., p.19.

82 Ibid. p.20.

teaching that one could make the pilgrimage to Karbala rather than Mecca.⁸³ Ali Karrar used the pamphlet to mobilise other ulama and local officials against Tajul.

In February 2006, violence was narrowly averted when Tajul started a new form of the Prophet's birthday celebration where everyone came together at the village mosque rather than holding separate celebrations at their houses for a month while giving money to *kiais* who came to give their blessings.⁸⁴ It was a direct challenge to the established social order. Sunni mobs came to the mosque carrying sickles and other traditional weapons, but the police managed to prevent a clash. Pressure continued over the next three years to condemn Tajul Muluk as deviant and demand that Shi'ism in Madura be banned. In 2007, Tajul was installed as the head of IJABI for Sampang district, with his brother Roisul Hukama, who had also studied at YAPI, on the executive council. Shortly thereafter, however, Roisul got into a dispute with his brother over a woman he wanted to marry but whom his brother had pledged to someone else.⁸⁵ The falling-out led Roisul to return to Sunnism. He joined forces with Ali Karrar and became one of his brother's strongest opponents.⁸⁶

In October 2009, the Sampang NU branch held a meeting with local ulama and government officials that concluded with an ultimatum to Tajul to stop teaching Shi'ism or face the legal consequences.⁸⁷ BASSRA, backed by the local government, used the letter as justification to try to expel him from Sampang. Throughout 2010, intimidation of Tajul and his followers intensified. In February 2011, BASSRA mobilised thousands of people to support their expulsion. On 11 April, the district police chief endorsed the plan in the interests of "maintaining stability" in Sampang.⁸⁸ Tajul bowed to the pressure and moved to Malang on 16 April.⁸⁹ But it did not satisfy the anti-Shi'a campaigners because his pesantren remained operational. On 28 May, the East Java provincial government joined in endorsing the expulsion and agreeing to prohibit the propagation of Shi'ism in Madura.⁹⁰

The climate continued to deteriorate. On 20 December 2011, an anti-Shi'a mob went to the home of Mohamed Sirri, one of Tajul's followers, barricaded the front door and set the house on fire, clearly intending to burn the family inside. They managed to escape. On 29 December, a mob of 500 burned down Tajul's house and pesantren. Despite prior knowledge of the planned assault, police failed to prevent it and then only found one suspect to arrest afterwards. He was tried, sentenced to time served, and then released.⁹¹

The tendency instead was to blame the victims. The day after the violence, Noer Tjahja, the Sampang district head who was running for re-election, suggested that "all fanatical followers of Shi'ism should be transmigrated to another island".⁹² BASSRA, the local MUI and Bakorpakem produced rulings in January 2012 that justified the violence by blaming it on Shi'a for promot-

83 "Ini dia Kesesatan Ajaran Syiah di Sampang", *aslibumiayu.net*, 2 September 2012.

84 See Tajul Muluk, *Tajul Muluk Pledoi and Pemolisian Konflik keagamaan*, (Surabaya, 2013).

85 Pledoi Tajul Muluk, p. 37 and Mohamad Nabil, "Konflik 'Syiah-Sunni' Sampang: Jalan Terjal Menuju Rekonsiliasi", *Pesantren for Peace*, undated, p.7.

86 "Di Balik Sengketa Syiah-Sunni di Madura", *viva.co.id*, 1 September 2012.

87 Kontras, "Laporan Investigasi dan Pemantauan Kasus Syiah Sampang," 2012, p. 5.

88 Kontras, *op.cit.*, p. 7-8.

89 "Negara Gagal Melindungi Jamaah Syiah Sampang", <http://www.andreasharsono.net/2011/12/negara-gagal-melindungi-jamaah-syiah.html>, 30 December 2011.

90 Kontras, *op.cit.*, p. 9.

91 The leniency was justified by the judges on the grounds that he only arrived at the site after the burning had taken place – meaning that no one who had actually planned the crime and torched the buildings was touched. "Perusak Pesantren Syiah Sampang Bebas", *Tempo.co*, 25 April 2012.

92 Kontras, *op.cit.*, p. 12.

ing heretical beliefs.⁹³ At the national level, the Minister of Religious Affairs, Suryadharma Ali, tasked by then President Yudhoyono to resolve the conflict, endorsed BASSRA's views. On 26 January 2012, he stated:

I recently read old documents from MUI and Ministry of Religious Affairs; they said that Shi'ism is not Islam. I will abide by those decisions.⁹⁴

Not only was it untrue that there were any earlier documents declaring Shi'ism to be heretical, but to suggest that Shi'a were non-believers was a virtual license to hardline Sunni groups to take the law into their own hands – as they had done against the Ahmadiyah minority. With the government not prepared to offer any protection, the situation continued to worsen. Some 300 Shi'ah had been evacuated to the Sampang sports stadium after the December violence; on 22 January 2012, the kabupaten government evicted them, saying it needed the stadium for the city's founding day celebrations. Anti-Shi'a communities protested when they tried to return home, saying they should leave Madura, and threats and intimidation followed. In March 2012, Tajul himself was arrested on blasphemy charges and in July, he was sentenced to two years in prison.⁹⁵

On 26 August 2012, as Tajul's followers were preparing to send their children back to YAPI and other Shi'ite schools in Java after a school break, a mob of some 1,500 people that had been gathering for hours attacked two Shi'a communities with bricks, knives, spears and machetes. One man was killed, another critically injured. Almost 50 homes were destroyed. Some in the community had contacted the police earlier asking for help, when it became clear that a mob was preparing to attack. None was forthcoming. The next day, the national police commander, military commander, BIN head and ministers of religion and home affairs met in Surabaya and discussed the situation, including a plan to transmigrate all Shi'a in Madura to another location.⁹⁶ On 30 August, police named Tajul's brother, Roisul Hukama, as a suspect, but after a trial in Surabaya, he was acquitted of all charges. In September, Tajul's sentence was doubled on appeal; judges used the fatwa of MUI Sampang as evidence that he had "hurt the feelings of the Muslims for spreading religious teachings that deviate from Islam".⁹⁷

Several analysts have made a persuasive case that the government's backing of the anti-Shi'a campaign was a direct result of candidates at the district and provincial levels trying to secure political backing for local elections.⁹⁸ The election for Sampang district head was scheduled for December 2012, for East Java governor in August 2013. In Jakarta, politicians were also mindful of national elections coming up in 2014.

At the district level, Noer Tjahja, the *bupati*, was seeking a second term, backed by the NU-dominated National Awakening Party (Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa, PKB). He knew he lacked religious credentials and needed ulama support to win, so he went out of his way to woo them in 2010 and 2011. Shortly after the December 2011 violence he gave a speech, caught on video, at a pesantren *Maulid* ceremony, where he worked the crowd:

93 On 11 January 2012, Pakem Sampang released a decree that declared Shi'ism heretical. On 1 January 2011, BASSRA sent a letter to MUI East Java demanding an official fatwa on Shi'ism. To add more pressure, MUI Sampang produced fatwa No. A-035/MUI/Spg/I/2012 dated 1 January 2012 labeling Tajul's Muluk teaching as deviant. MUI East Java issued its anti-Shi'a fatwa on 21 January 2012.

94 He was apparently referring to the 1984 advisory which in fact did not ban Shi'ism. "Sebut Syiah Bukan Islam Menteri Agama Dikecam," Okezone.com, 28 January 2012.

95 Tajul appealed his sentence but in September 2012, the appellate court not only rejected his appeal but also increased his sentence to four years. He appealed again to the Supreme Court but it was rejected in January 2013.

96 "Genting, Kapolri dan Panglima TNI Rapat di Grahadi," Surabayapagi.com, 28 August 2012.

97 Supreme Court Verdict No. 1787 K/Pid/2012, available on <http://putusan.mahkamahagung.go.id/putusan/downloadpdf/4a888fc06057b00265e6700593b395bf/pdf>.

98 See in particular, Ahnaf et al, *Politik Lokal dan Konflik Keagamaan*, op.cit.

If there is a deviant sect here, expel them! [applause] Expel them! I will take responsibility!...This is the word of a trader, if there isn't a market for what you're selling, shut down, sell what the market takes. We have Pak Yusuf here [a district police officer]. If they come here, please arrest them. If they come here, don't protect them, expel them! [applause, approving shouts of "Expel!"] We have security forces, the police, the military, intelligence but I'm the boss. The person responsible for the whole district of Sampang is the bupati. There's only one bupati. So you in the security forces, police, military, expel them! [applause]. We want to save the majority. I can't stand it any longer, I swear by Allah, ask Kiai Rois [Tajul's brother] if you don't believe me. If I become bupati again, this problem will be finished! I'll take care of it for sure!⁹⁹

In the end, though, the Shi'a-baiting did not help: when the final vote count was in, Noer Tjahja came in third.

East Java Governor Soekarwo and Vice Governor Saifullah Yusuf (known as Gus Ipul), were also up for re-election in 2013 and also wanted to keep important ulama on side. On 23 January 2012, top East Javanese ulama used provincial government funds to go to Jakarta to lobby MUI for an anti-Shi'a fatwa. The heads of NU and Muhammadiyah both rejected the idea, however, and the Yudhoyono government had concerns about jeopardising diplomatic relations with Iran.¹⁰⁰

In March 2012, 50 ulama representing MUI, NU, and Muhammadiyah met Governor Soekarwo to ask him to ban the propagation of Shi'ism in East Java, as he had Ahmadiyah teachings in 2011.¹⁰¹ Faced with mounting pressure as the election drew closer, he issued a broadly-worded decree in July on "Guidance of Religious Activities and Monitoring of Deviant Sects in East Java". It did not mention Shi'ism by name but it banned "every religious activity consisting of incitement, blasphemy, defamation and/or interpretations that deviate from the core religious teachings followed in Indonesia in a way that could disturb public order."¹⁰² The decree said that a religious activity would be deemed "deviant" if it met criteria set out by the MUI. Since the provincial MUI had banned Shi'ism in January, the regulation's intent was clear. In the end, Soekarwo and Gus Ipul won the election, although the fact that they were backed by 32 parties and had presided over 7 per cent economic growth in their first term meant that the anti-Shi'a factor probably played little role in their victory.

B. East Java Violence and the NU Hardliners

In 2011, around the same time that anti-Shi'a violence was building in Sampang, other Sunni-Shi'a clashes were taking place in East Java, rooted in a sense that NU's traditional Sunnism was under threat from aggressive Shi'a recruitment. As one prominent cleric put it:

It's almost impossible for Muhammadiyah people become Shi'a because they don't respect *habaib* [people with the title Habib who claim genealogical lineage to the Prophet]. If someone converts to Shi'ism here, he or she must be from the NU community. Because the NU community really love *habaib*, and Shi'a claim that their religion is the religion of *ahl al-bait*. They are taking NU's ummat away from us with this kind of deception.¹⁰³

99 Ibid., p.25, IPAC translation.

100 There was also some theological complexity associated with making a general fatwa on Shi'ism because of its many sects, some of which, such as the Zaidiyah, are acknowledged by most Sunni ulama.

101 East Java Governor Regulation No. 188/94/KPTS/013/2011. On the meeting, see 'Lebih 50 Ulama se-Jatim Desak Larang Syiah,' Hidayatullah.com, 6 March 2012.

102 Regulation of East Java Governor No.55/2012, Article 4.

103 IPAC Interview, Luthfi Bashori, Malang, 5 January 2016.

They were also, however, the fruit of a systematic anti-Shi'a campaign launched by conservative NU groups beginning in the 1990s. These groups include al-Bayyinat, Forum Anti Aliran Sesat (FAAS), and Majelis Ta'lim ASWAJA (MT ASWAJA).¹⁰⁴ Joining forces with them was the so-called Sunni Straight Path or Aswaja Garis Lurus. Founded in 2011 by Malang *kiai* Luthfi Bashori, this was a traditionalist but hardline fringe of NU composed of some 200 young, conservative ulama, many of them Saudi alumni, who were concerned that NU was being taken over by liberals. Both Luthfi and another prominent anti-Shi'a *kiai*, Idrus Romli, were anti-Wahhabi like much of NU, but they saw some benefits from occasional tactical alliances with salafis and modernists alike, including in the fight against Shi'ism.¹⁰⁵

By 2004, the Shi'a community was feeling the pressure of increased activity from groups like MT-ASWAJA.¹⁰⁶ In 2006, a Sunni mob protested an Ashura celebration at Al-Itroh, another Shi'ite school in Bangil. On 24 December 2006, an IJABI meeting in Bondowoso, East Java was attacked by a mob. There were no fatalities but three houses and a small mosque were destroyed. As more and more people were drawn into the anti-Shi'a campaign, MT-ASWAJA decided to press the issue and call for a ban on Shi'ism. On 20 April 2007, it organised the first major anti-Shi'a protest in Bangil, mobilising some 1,000 people, but police and the *bupati* managed to prevent any violence.¹⁰⁷

From 2007 to 2010, YAPI was the target of minor attacks - verbal abuse, vandalism, stone-throwing - usually on Tuesday nights, after a regular *pengajian* at a nearby mosque whose head was known for his anti-Shi'a activities.¹⁰⁸ Then, on 15 February 2011, as BASSRA was intensifying its campaign against Tajul in Sampang, an ASWAJA mob attacked YAPI's boys' dormitory with stones and bricks, injuring nine students and two security guards. The mob had come straight from an anti-Shi'a *pengajian* held by Luthfi Bashori - an ASWAJA adviser - at his pesantren in neighboring Malang.¹⁰⁹ Luthfi had invited a firebrand anti-Shi'a preacher, Habib Muhdlar Al-Hamid, to speak, and he incited the participants to attack YAPI on their way home.¹¹⁰ Effective police work kept tensions in check after the outbreak and the perpetrators were arrested the next day.

In Jember, law enforcement was less effective. A minor Shi'a-Sunni brawl took place in May 2012 in Puger subdistrict, followed by a worse clash in September 2013 after Habib Muhdlar incited violence against a Shi'ite school, and a Shi'a mob then killed a Sunni man in retaliation. As in Sampang and Bangil, the roots of violence lay in competition between traditional NU

104 MT-Aswaja was the NU-Muhammadiyah group set up in the early 1990s in Bangil to challenge YAPI, the Shi'a school, but reborn in 2000 as an NU habib and *kiai* group against Shi'ism.

105 Luthfi was a member of the vigilante group Islamic Defenders Front (FPI) and the more extremist Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia (MMI). Idrus Romli was a popular young ustadz whose public debates with Shi'a and Salafi ulama are frequently uploaded on YouTube.

106 Some think that the anti-Shi'a mobilisation was prompted by *Kiai Nur Kholis*, the imam of Bangil central mosque, who had joined ASWAJA in 2000. A former deputy head of MUI Bangil and the advisory council of NU's Bangil branch, Nur Kholis was one of the most senior ulama in Bangil and his involvement was crucial for the anti-Shi'a campaign.

107 Rizal Panggabean and Ihsan Ali Fauzi, *Pemolisian Konflik Keagamaan*, PUSAD Paramadina, Jakarta, 2014, p. 138.

108 IPAC interview with a former YAPI student, Jakarta, 24 December 2015.

109 Panggabean and Fauzi, *op.cit.*, p. 142.

110 Habib Muhdlar came from impeccable NU lineage: his late grandfather, Habib Soleh Al-Hamid, was a highly respected NU scholar; many in the Jember area consider him a saint (*wali*). But Muhdlar's main teacher, Zain bin Smith, was a traditionalist Indonesian-Hadrami Sunni sheikh based in Medina, Saudi Arabia and it is from him that Muhdlar may have acquired his strong anti-Shi'a attitude. Muhdlar's family is also close to Thohir Alkaf, the anti-Shi'a preacher from Pekalongan.

clerics and the Shi'ite school head.¹¹¹

In sum, the anti-Shi'a activity in East Java involved NU *kiai* who felt directly threatened by what they saw as Shi'a encroachment on their traditional spheres of influence. In Jember, the competition between schools was probably more important than religious differences. For the Salafis, however, the issue was still overwhelmingly doctrinal: the threat Shi'ism posed to the purity of the faith. For them, YAPI is a major cancer that needs to be removed. There may be an element of desire to get back at Said Aqil for his anti-Wahhabi campaign and keep NU divided, but for most Salafis, the stakes are much higher.

VII. THE ESTABLISHMENT OF ANNAS

The violence in Sampang in December 2011 prompted several conservative Muslim leaders in West Java to initiate moves toward a national anti-Shi'a alliance. The idea first arose at the 2012 national congress of the Forum Ulama Ummat Indonesia (FUUI), one of the many pro-shari'ah advocacy organisations that emerged with the opening of democratic space. Founded in 2001 by a Bandung-based reformist *kiai* named Athian Ali, it focused on countering liberalism, Christianisation (*kristenisasi*), apostasy (*pemurtadan*) and deviant sects.¹¹² It is probably best known for having in 2002 imposed a death sentence on Ulil Abshar Abdalla, founder of the Liberal Islam Network (JIL).

Athian Ali is a deeply conservative activist with ties across the Islamic organisational spectrum and close relations with local politicians – most recently demonstrated when he was asked to give a lecture before the solar eclipse at Bandung's largest mosque in the presence of the West Java governor.¹¹³ As hardline coalitions gained ground after Reformasi, Athian's name kept appearing as part of an interlocking directorate of organisations whose members were involved in protesting the construction of churches, preventing Christian gatherings, attacking Ahmadiyah property and taking part in anti-vice raids – in some cases, in partnership with

111 IPAC interview with Habib Isa, Jember, 7 January 2016. The school head in question was Habib Ali bin Umar Al-Habsyi . From 1991, when he first opened his pesantren, Darus Sholihin, his relations with local *kiai* were poor, in part because they were competing for students, in part because the pesantren seemed to be particularly well-endowed. Villagers wondered how he managed to develop such a fine school without any obvious source of income and suspected, without any evidence, that he received Iranian funding. Years of bickering came to a head in 2011, when the anti-Shi'a sentiments across Java had grown stronger. Habib Ali gave a public sermon that many claimed had Shi'a overtones and accused him of deviance, giving recordings of the sermon to the local MUI branch for a judgment. In June 2011, Habib Muhdlar Al-Hamid, the fiery anti-Shi'a preacher who had provoked the YAPI attack in February, led a *pengajian* at the pesantren of Habib Ali's main opponent. Efforts to get him to cancel the program failed. When the program took place as scheduled, Muhdlar incited the crowd, telling the hundreds who had gathered, "You will go to heaven if you die fighting against Shi'a". Conflict erupted again in September 2013, however, when a Sunni mob broke through a police barricade as Habib Ali's pesantren was holding a carnival to commemorate *Maulid*. A few hours later, Habib Ali's son mobilised about 30 people to retaliate. In the clash that followed, one of the Sunnis was killed See "Inilah Kronologi Perusakan Masjid dan Ponpes Darussolihin," *Tribunnews.com*, 12 September 2013. In the end, the police arrested fourteen people, seven Sunnis and seven Shi'a. In February 2014, the Surabaya district court gave the Sunni attackers six months, while the Shi'a were given eight years for killing, incitement of violence and torture leading to death.

112 FUUI, "Selayang Pandang Forum Ulama Umat Indonesia FUUI," 1 February 2008, available on <https://fuui.wordpress.com/2008/02/01/selayang-paandang-forum-ulama-umat-indonesia-fuui/>.

113 "Wakil dan Gubernur Jabar Pimpin Shalat Gerhana di Masjid Al-Muttaqien Gedung Sate," *Kabarjabarnews.com*, 9 March 2016. Athian Ali came from a Persis (reformist) background and had gone to study at al-Azhar University in Egypt for both his bachelor's and master's degrees. When he returned in 1981, he was taken under the wing of EZ Muttaqien, an NU *kiai*, leader of Gerakan Pemuda Islam Indonesia (GPII) and former Masyumi member of parliament. Athian became Muttaqien's teaching assistant at Universitas Islam Bandung and during the 1980s, a partner in advocating the lifting of ban on hijabs in high schools and against the teaching of pluralism in schools. Another issue they tackled was the Indonesianisation of Islamic law (*fiqh a la Indonesia*), a concept coined by Munawwar Syadzali, the minister of religious affairs from 1981 to 1988. Muslim activists argued that the concept allowed for the development of non-mainstream Islamic thought – and Shi'ism in particular. IPAC interview, Athian Ali, Bandung, 19 January 2016. <https://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/laskarjihad/conversations/messages/361> and Solahudin, op.cit., p.185.

local police and often accompanied by low-level vigilante violence.¹¹⁴ He did not lead trends as much as follow them and seemed to have an unerring instinct for how to take issues that had attracted public interest and mobilise mass protests around them.

Until the Sampang issue arose, Shi'ism had not been a particular preoccupation because it was not in the public eye, though Athian Ali was personally close to several anti-Shi'a Persis leaders and also had a longstanding antipathy to Jalaluddin Rakhmat. He had known the latter from the 1980s when both were rising stars among young Muslim intellectuals in Bandung. He kept an eye on the development of Shi'ism in Bandung but only took action after January 2012, when he received a visit from 27 East Java ulama who had come to lobby MUI to ban Shi'ism in the wake of the Madura violence. On 28 February 2012, FUUI agreed to formulate a fatwa on Shi'ism.¹¹⁵

FUUI then organised an expert meeting from 17 to 22 March, with a team consisting of Amin Djamaluddin from LPPI, Daud Rasyid and Hartono Ahmad Jaiz from DDII and Luthfi Bashori from NU Garis Lurus.¹¹⁶ They drafted a fatwa declaring Shi'ism to be "deviant and promoting deviancy (*sesat dan menyesatkan*)". The fatwa was issued on 22 April 2012 during FUUI's second national congress, attended by the West Java governor and by prominent ulama from both reformist and traditionalist camps. Thohir Alkaf, the anti-Shi'a cleric from Pekalongan and a delegation from Madura were also present. The congress agreed to establish a national anti-Shi'a alliance.¹¹⁷

Another unpublicised meeting took place in 2013 at the home of a senior NU kiai, Hamid Baidlowi, at his pesantren in Lasem, Central Java to follow up on the idea. Hamid had been one of the most vocal critics of Gus Dur in the 1990s, accusing him of being pro-Shi'a.¹¹⁸ The participants at the Lasem gathering could not reach any agreement, however, and one NU kiai who was there explained why:

There were way too many Salafis in there, they only wanted to use NU. We have a large mass base and they don't. I've joined other Salafi-dominated organisations and enlisted my people as members too. Why? Because I thought they were very good at managing organisations and I wanted my people to learn from them. If they need 100 million rupiah for an event, all they have to do is send a few texts here and there, and they can easily get the money in one day. They have so much money but they are very stingy. Once PKS invited me to speak at an anti-Shi'a seminar in Jogja. I had to purchase my own ticket and they only reimbursed half the cost. They don't

114 "Police investigate church closures, vow to take action," Jakarta Post, 27 August 2005. FUUI's anti-apostasy division includes a paramilitary unit called the Anti-Apostasy Front (Barisan Anti Pemurtadan, BAP) whose members have been involved in vandalism against churches and Ahmadiyah mosques but rarely prosecuted.

115 Tajul Muluk, *op.cit.*, 2013 and <https://fuuina.wordpress.com/2014/07/01/maklumat-fuu-indonesia-tentang-pemilihan-presiden-9-juli-2014/>.

116 Amin Djamaluddin was recruited by M. Natsir, the founding leader of DDII, in early 1980s as DDII's in-house expert on deviant sects. He has written numerous anti-Ahmadiyah and anti-Shi'a pamphlets and books. Hartono Ahmad Jaiz established one of the most vocal anti-Shi'a websites, nahimunkar.com. Daud Rasyid, a former lecturer with the Saudi-affiliated Institute for Arabic and Islamic Learning (LIPIA), is also a prominent anti-Shi'a preacher.

117 "Iftitah dan Sejarah ANNAS", 8 February 2015, available on <https://fuuina.wordpress.com/2015/02/08/iftitah-dan-sejarah-annas/>.

118 Hamid Baidlowi and other conservative ulama from NU continued to make tactical alliances with intolerant groups such as FUUI and the Jakarta-based Forum Umat Islam (FUI), which was also involved in anti-Ahmadiyah violence. In 2008, Hamid and a number of NU kiai including the then head of BASSRA Nailurrahman, signed the FUI-led initiative called the Darunnajah Declaration, an alliance of 200 ulama from NU, FUI, Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI) and other organisations to pursue four main goals: purification of Islamic thoughts, cross-organisation coordination, the protection and defence of Islamic proselytising, and formulating Islamic solutions to various problems faced by Muslims. The Declaration was made in the aftermath of the Monas Incident on 1 June 2008, a violent clash between the FPI-led hardline coalition and the National Alliance for Religious and Faith Freedom (which was led by progressive NU youth) as the latter did a mass protest in defense of Ahmadi minority. See "Deklarasi Darunnajah", 2 August 2008, available on <http://hizbut-tahrir.or.id/2008/08/02/deklarasi-darunnajah/>.

care about people outside their own group. They often manipulate us. So during the meeting in Lasem, I told Kiai Luthfi to negotiate the terms of the cooperation but it didn't work out. This ANNAS person still calls me regularly but I never attended their events after that.¹¹⁹

It is significant that the speaker would suggest that both ANNAS, led by Athian Ali, and PKS were Salafi because NU since 2010 has been on a virulent anti-Wahhabi campaign. To the extent that the anti-Shi'a campaign could be portrayed as being led by Wahhabis, the chances of greater NU involvement would be very low. Yet Athian Ali, a master tactician, was clearly hoping that the NU outrage in Sampang would bring senior leaders into his orbit, and if they could rally the NU masses against Shi'ism, perhaps similar alliances in pursuit of other pro-Shari'ah goals could follow.

In the end, it was only the NU hardliners who joined. On 20 April 2014, the National Anti-Shi'a Alliance (ANNAS) was officially inaugurated at Masjid Al-Fajr in Bandung, West Java, with Athian Ali as head. Among those giving supporting speeches were Hamid Baidlowi (NU), Maman Abdurrahman (Persis), Muhammad Al-Khaththath (Forum Umat Islam, FUI), Cholil Ridwan (MUI) and Lalilurrahman (BASSRA).

ANNAS's founding statement made four points: it would promote virtue and prevent vice (*amar maruf nahi munkar*); it would take any measures necessary to prevent the spreading of heretical Shi'a teachings; it would forge good relations with other dakwah organisations; and it would demand that the government immediately ban Shi'ism and revoke all licenses for foundations, organisations and institutions owned by the Shi'a community.¹²⁰

Branches sprang up around the country but mostly in places where hardline clerics already had a strong political presence, as in Garut, Tasikmalaya, Cianjur, Bogor and Purwakarta in West Java, Probolinggo in East Java, and Balikpapan in East Kalimantan. As of February 2016, ANNAS was preparing to establish more branches in so-called "Shi'a-prone" cities, particularly in Sumatra. According to Athian Ali, ANNAS was not concerned with areas where a strong anti-Shi'a movement was already active, as it was in East Java. Instead it was focusing on regions facing rapid development of Shi'a communities that lacked Sunni resistance, for example in Pekanbaru and Medan where he said many Shi'a immigrants from Afghanistan and Iraq were trying to promote Shi'ism.¹²¹ The reluctance to work in East Java may have been more an acknowledgment that this was NU's turf: conservative NU kiai there believe that ANNAS has only a symbolic role at the national level and no business working on NU territory.¹²² Similarly, a Persis ustadz in Bandung called ANNAS as "loudspeaker", useful to attract attention but lacking much influence on the ground.¹²³

Most of the groups and individuals that joined ANNAS had been previously involved in anti-Shi'a or anti-Ahmadi campaigns before. ANNAS appointed people like Ahmad Zein Alkaf (the leader of the Surabaya-based al-Bayyinah and member of NU's regional advisory board), Farid Okbah, and Said Abdussamad (leader of LPPI Makassar) as members of its advisory board. ANNAS also gave the leadership position of its new branches to locally influential clerics.¹²⁴

But the establishment of ANNAS also generated a strong backlash from moderate Muslim clerics, human rights defenders and politicians. The reactions in Cirebon and Bogor were particularly noteworthy. In April 2015 in Cirebon, NU's youth wing Ansor and its paramilitary

119 IPAC interview with with an NU Kiai in Jember, 7 January 2016.

120 Arya Dipa, "Organised Persecution of Shi'ites Launched," *Jakarta Post*, 21 April 2014.

121 IPAC interview with Athian Ali, Bandung, 19 January 2016.

122 IPAC interview with Luthfi Bashori, Malang, 5 January 2016.

123 IPAC interview with a Persis official, Bandung, 20 February 2016.

124 IPAC interview with Athian Ali, Bandung, 19 January 2016. For example in predominantly NU Cianjur, the head of the NU branch became the head of ANNAS.

wing Banser demanded that district police (Kapolres) prevent the launching of ANNAS-Cirebon, planned for 4 April. They were incensed that ANNAS had put the NU logo on its flyers. On the day of the ANNAS-Cirebon declaration, Banser mobilised hundreds of people to stop ANNAS sympathisers from entering the venue.¹²⁵

Likewise, when Bogor mayor Bima Arya issued a 22 October 2015 circular prohibiting Shi'a from celebrating Ashura, his action was widely criticised by human rights and Muslim groups. On 27 October, the National Human Rights Commission released a formal letter asking Bima to retract the discriminative ruling, and in November, the Setara Institute, a human rights NGO, placed Bogor at the bottom of its index on tolerant cities.¹²⁶ Then, on 20 November, Ansor and other youth organisations in Bogor formed the Nationalist Alliance for Tolerance (ANAS-GETOL) as a counterweight to ANNAS.¹²⁷ The head of Ansor-Bogor said he believed the real target of ANNAS was NU:

Before, their strategy was to attack NU directly, going after *Maulid*, after visiting graves, branding everything as *bid'ah* (unwarranted innovations) saying everything NU was doing was deviant. But for the last few years, there's been pushback, people rejected them. So they changed tack with a new strategy using the Shi'a issue. Their target is the same, it's still us. But they're starting with Shi'ism. In fact, there are moderates and hardliners in Shi'ism, and there are Shi'a whose teachings are almost the same as NU, whether we're talking about prayers, *Maulid*, *tahlil*, *ziarah*, everything that NU kiai do. Their strategy is to get the support of these traditional *kiai* to join forces in eradicating Shi'ism, and we can't deny it, some of the traditional *kiai* have been trapped. We've detected some of the *kiai* they've ensnared, we've met them, had discussions. And eventually these *kiai* begin to realise that they're just being exploited.¹²⁸

ANAS-GETOL and other groups managed to pressure Bima Arya to reject the declaration of ANNAS-Bogor that was scheduled to take place on 22 November with his photo on the pamphlet, announcing him as one of the speakers. He finally responded by denying any ties with ANNAS and blaming MUI-Bogor for pressuring him to issue the circular.¹²⁹

The emergence of ANNAS, despite the publicity, may not in fact signal any greater popular antipathy toward Shi'ism but rather a skilful use of the media by a vocal hardline minority to promote its own interests. It nevertheless contributes to a climate of intolerance and focuses attention on the Shi'a in a way that may already be having harmful consequences because of the war in Syria.

VIII. IMPACT OF THE SYRIAN CONFLICT

The Syrian conflict has added a new and potentially lethal dimension to Sunni-Shi'a tensions in Indonesia. ISIS has called for the killing of Shi'a, and some Indonesians who have sworn allegiance would be happy to oblige. It has also led to realignment in relations between salafis and salafi jihadis. Anti-Shi'ism initially, but very briefly, drew the two groups together. As ISIS began attacking salafis, they parted company. But on the principle of "the enemy of my enemy is my friend", Indonesian jihadis supporting the al-Nusra front drew closer to the Salafi community as the rift in Syria between the al-Qaeda linked al-Nusra and ISIS deepened. As a

125 "Banser Bubarkan Tabligh Intoleran di Cirebon," Arrahmahnews.com, 5 April 2015.

126 "Bogor Kota Paling Kurang Toleran Menurut Studi Setara," Antaranews.com, 16 November 2015.

127 "Polisi Resmi Tak Beri Izin Aliansi Anti Syiah Gelar Deklarasi di Bogor," Madinaonline, 21 November 2015.

128 "GP Ansor Bogor: Tebar Racun Intoleransi, ANNAS Langgar Konstitusi," Ahlulbaitindonesia.or.id, 22 November 2015.

129 "Bima Arya Larang Pelantikan Pengurus Anti-Syiah Bogor," Tempo.co, 20 November 2015.

result, al-Nusra supporters have stepped up anti-Shi'a rhetoric and some Indonesian Salafis have begun to portray al-Qaeda in more positive terms.

None of this is good news for the Shi'a community in Indonesia, but it will be worse if more young Shi'a are drawn into the militant fringe.

A. *Syria and Shi'a*

The Syrian conflict was largely portrayed in the Muslim media in terms of an evil Shi'ite oppressor, Bashar al-Assad, massacring Sunni civilians. As such, it fed into the Salafi campaign as well as attracting the interest of salafi jihadis. Beginning in 2012, many groups in the Salafi and salafi jihadi communities began holding public discussions on Syria, raising humanitarian funds and sending delegations to Syria to deliver them.¹³⁰ Salafis were among the first to react, setting up the Medical Mission to Syria (Misi Medis Suriah) but many others got involved as well.

Many of the Salafi were equally upset about the gains of the Houthi in Yemen and a few Indonesian Salafi students died defending their school against a Houthi attack in 2011. All of this fed into the notion, promoted by clerics like Farid Okbah, that Shi'a everywhere sought to destabilise Muslim countries and they constituted a major threat to Indonesian national unity.¹³¹ One book written by MUI member Abul Chair Ramadhan claimed that Shi'a plan to stage a revolution in Indonesia in 2020. He quoted As'ad Ali, the former BIN deputy, as saying that seventeen Shi'ites from East Java had trained with Hezbollah in Lebanon to become fighters.¹³² (No evidence of this has been produced.)

Anti-Shi'a material on both Salafi and salafi jihadi websites shot up after Indonesians began taking an interest in the Syrian war. A simple key word search on Arrahmah.com – a pro-an-Nusra site -- shows that from 2006 to 2010, Arrahmah posted 31 anti-Shi'a related articles and news.¹³³ From 2011 to 2013, the number of anti-Shia entries doubled.

One of the several narratives used by ISIS for recruitment, as illustrated most recently by the January 2016 issue of the online magazine, *Dabiq*, stresses how Shi'a aim to massacre all Sunnis and therefore why killing Shi'a is both justified and obligatory.¹³⁴ This is almost certainly a factor in the decision of several pro-ISIS groups in Indonesia to decide to target Shi'a, though to date, no plots have succeeded.

B. *Anti-Shi'a plots by pro-ISIS groups in Indonesia*

Indonesia has at least twelve groups and likely more that have pledged allegiance to ISIS. Of these three have planned or at least discussed attacks on Shi'a.

In June 2015, Bahrin Naim, an extremist from Solo who had joined ISIS in Syria the previous January, put together a small cell in Java via Telegram, the encrypted messaging app that has been widely used by ISIS supporters in Indonesia and worldwide. He sent instructions

130 See IPAC, "Indonesians and the Syrian Conflict", Report No. 6, 30 January 2014, p.5.

131 One of Farid Okbah's lectures in 2015 was entitled "Meswaspadai Syiah dan Ancamannya untuk NKRI". See "Kajian waspadai Syiah Bersama Ustadz Farid Okbah di Tulungagung," www.kiblat.net, 29 March 2016.

132 Abul Choir *Syiah Menurut Sumber Syiah Ancaman Nyata NKRI* (Shi'a, Clear Threat to the Republic of Indonesia) (Jakarta, 2015), p. 184.

133 "Anti-shia related entries" on Arrahmah.com can be classified into four categories: a) those containing general religious arguments on the heresy of Shia's theology and practices; b) the Shia-Jewish conspiracy; c) stories of Shia's aggressiveness in spreading its ideology in predominantly Sunni countries including Indonesia; and d) stories of Sunni victimisation by Shi'a (e.g. in Iran, Syria) with explicit attribution of blame to Shi'ite teachings and/or actors. The data is obtained through key word search in Arrahmah online archive from 2006 to 2013. A search of the keyword "Syiah" – Indonesian spelling of Shia – on the website's search engine generated 237 entries. A careful reading of the entries is employed to distil contents that actually contain anti-Shia related hate speeches.

134 See "The Rafidah: From Ibn Sa'ba to the Dajjal", *Dabiq*, Edition 13 accessible on www.clarionproject.org.

via Telegram on how to make bombs, and the Solo-based cell planned attacks in August 2015 on a Buddhist temple, a church, and a police station. All were foiled by the police and most of the plotters arrested. One of Naim's men based in Bekasi, outside Jakarta, managed to avoid arrest, however, and Naim turned to him for his next operation. He initially instructed the man to target Jakarta's Christian governor but in October 2015, he added two more targets, one of which was a Shi'ite mosque in Bogor. It is unclear which mosque had been chosen, but rumours had spread on various anti-Shi'a websites in mid-October that a big Ashura celebration was to be held at Masjid Al-'Adhom in western Bogor on 23 October, with 400 participants and four Iranian ulama as the main speakers.¹³⁵ In the end, nothing happened and the Bekasi man and several associates were picked up by police in December.

Also arrested in December were several members of Katibul Iman, a small pro-ISIS group set up in Solo in August 2015 by Abu Husna, a former JI leader who left JI for the more militant Jamaah Anshorul Tauhid (JAT) in 2008. Abu Husna was very close to JAT's founder, Abu Bakar Ba'asyir, and was imprisoned at the same maximum security facility on the island of Nusakambangan, off the south coast of Java. Both swore allegiance to ISIS after the declaration of the caliphate in 2014. Abu Husna was released in August 2015 and within days of his return to Solo was involved in plans to set up a new jihadi organisation called Katibul Iman. By late 2015 they were reportedly planning operations against Shi'a leaders and institutions. They were also reportedly planning to attack Iranian refugees in Pekanbaru who they claimed were making contract marriages with local women and spreading Shi'ism. The planning was only in the earliest stages at the time its would-be field coordinators were arrested.

While Bahrnun Naim's interest in Shi'a may have been directly linked to ISIS propaganda, Katibul Iman's motivations may have been more local. Its main field coordinator, Abu Jundi, assigned by Abu Husna to recruit in Sumatra, had a strong Salafi background and Katibul Iman's founder, Abu Husna, had differences with an alleged Shi'a leader in Solo going back decades. Their differences resurfaced in 2012 when the man in question gave a widely recorded sermon taking Assad's side in the Syrian conflict.¹³⁶

Finally, one man recruited for operations in Jakarta in early 2016 by Bahrumisyah, leader of the main faction of Indonesian fighters in Syria, suggested that his group saw Shi'a as one of the main enemies.

If it is true that Salafi links might make salafi jihadi groups more prone to anti-Shi'a targeting, then the newest and largest pro-ISIS coalition, Jamaah Ansharul Khilafah Islamiyah (JAKI) could begin targeting Shi'a as well. Abu Jandal, the JAKI-linked commander of an Indonesian military unit in Syria, was one of the few cross-overs from salafi to salafi jihadi. He had studied with salafi leader Jafar Umar Thalib and joined his Laskar Jihad when the Maluku conflict erupted in 1999. He adopted salafi jihadi ideology after he lost a debate with salafi-turned-jihadi cleric Aman Abdurrahman, JAKI's ideological leader. The fact that JAKI's strongest base is located in East Java, a region that has seen such a high level of anti-Shi'a activity, might make targeting Shi'a an attractive recruiting device.

¹³⁵ "Syiah di Bogor Jawa Barat", Faktasyiah.blogspot.co.id, 19 October 2015.

¹³⁶ "Mudzakir Culas dalam masalah Syiah: Berikut Kesaksian Seorang Aktivist Senior Abu Husna," Arrahmah.com, 24 December 2013. The teacher in question, Muzakkir, ran a pesantren in Solo. In a letter posted on various jihadi websites, Abu Husna said he first became suspicious that Muzakkir was a Shi'a when he saw Habib Husein of YAPI walking into the school in the 1980s; Habib Husein's children studied at the school. Then in 1998, Muzakkir came to Malaysia where Abdullah Sungkar, the founder of JI leader, reportedly advised him to stay away from Shi'ism. A little later, Abu Husna suggested that Muzakkir had been involved in a contract marriage. In 2013, Muzakkir visited Abu Husna and Abu Bakar Ba'asyir in prison. Abu Husna says he asked Muzakkir about his opinion of Khomeini but got no response. The accusation that Muzakkir was Shi'a emerged again after the 2012 sermon. Muzakkir allegedly said that Syrian rebel groups were funded by the US and that labelling Assad as Shi'a meant falling into American trap. He also accused Indonesian fighters in Syria of being motivated by money.

C. *Shi'a militancy*

The tiny militant wing of Indonesian Shi'a could exacerbate the problem, although it is unlikely to attract significant new support; the influence of moderates like Jalaluddin Rakhmat remains very strong. Nevertheless, its very existence feeds into anti-Shi'a narratives from the Indonesian jihadi community that feature evidence of growing militancy and reinforce the murderous image of Shi'a at home and abroad.

One frequently cited incident is a confrontation between a mob led by a Shi'a ustadz, Ibrahim al-Habsyi, and the security guards of Az Zikra Mosque in Sentul, Bogor, which serves as the headquarter of the Majelis Az Zikra, a *zikr* (spiritual cultivation) group led by popular "Salafi-Sufist" Ustadz Arifin Ilham.¹³⁷ Sometime around late December 2014, residents around his Az Zikra mosque put a massive banner up saying: "We the residents of Az Zikra Hill Muslim Housing Complex Sentul Reject Shi'ism". Some Shi'a in Bogor discovered photos of the banner on a WhatsApp group and on 11 February 2015, four men came to Az Zikra to ask that the banner be taken down. When they did not get a satisfactory answer from the security guard, they left and later returned with 38 people. A brawl ensued with the security guards, injuring one.

It soon became clear that at least some of the men belonged to Emilia's OASE and while there have been no confrontations since, the impact of the incident lingers, a reminder that Shi'a militancy is possible.

In September 2015, ABI and IJABI publicly criticised OASE's plan to invite Australian Sheikh Muhammad Tawhidi to attend OASE's celebration of Idul Ghadir, an important Shi'a holiday. Tawhidi is known for his controversial preaching, including sharp criticism of the Prophet's Companions that often angers the Sunnis.¹³⁸ ABI issued a statement saying among other things that "Sheikh Muhammad Tawhidi has repeatedly insulted historical figures who are admired by Muslims. His presence in Indonesia could ruin efforts to forge unity among different *madzhab* and efforts to unite Muslims against Zionism".¹³⁹ It urged the government to ban the event, unsuccessfully as it turned out.¹⁴⁰ The incident underscored the commitment of IJABI and ABI to good relations with Sunnis and their willingness to act together against their own more radical flank.

IX. CONCLUSIONS

The history of anti-Shi'ism in Indonesia is one of a changing mix of personal rivalries, political interests and international developments, overlaid by the constant of Salafi antipathy. With a

137 Arifin Ilham, who comes from a Muhammadiyah background, rose to fame in 2001. Unlike most reformists and Salafis who reject the practice of collective *zikr* as *bid'ah*, Arifin invented a new kind of collective *zikr* followed by thousands of people on live television. It was welcomed by reformists and Salafis – even some Salafi jihadis – because it answers the urgent need of some Muslims who found scripturalist Islam "too dry". In 2007, Arifin received massive funding from the Tripoli-based World Islamic Call Society linked to the late Muammar Qaddafi to build the grand Muammar Qaddafi Mosque in Sentul to accommodate his growing followers. Libyan funding stopped after Qaddafi's ouster, and Arifin immediately changed the mosque name to Az Zikra. He is known to be close to FPI leader Habib Rizieq and since 2012, has grown closer to Abu Jibril, the leader of Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia. When Abu Jibril's son, who fought for an Al Qaeda-affiliated group, died in Syria in March 2015, Arifin expressed his deep admiration of the young mujahid on his Facebook page. For more on Arifin Ilham, see Julia Day Howell, "Indonesia's Salafi Sufis," 2009, available on <https://dr.ntu.edu.sg/bitstream/handle/10220/6101/WP170.pdf?sequence=1>. For his Facebook status, see <https://www.satuislam.org/nasional/tangisan-arifin-ilham-untuk-teroris-al-qaeda-putra-abu-jibril/>.

138 For more on Tawhidi, see his website http://www.tawhidi.com/?page_id=2503 and <http://vidzzhub.com/watch/X28czKB-ZJ4c/allama-sheikh-tawhidi-why-the-shia-exist>.

139 ABI, "Pernyataan Sikap DPP ABI Menyambut Hari Al-Ghadir," 30 September 2015, available on <http://www.aahlulbaitin-donesia.or.id/berita/pernyataan-sikap-dpp-abi-menyambut-hari-al-ghadir-1436-h/>.

140 In the end, Tawhidi came anyway, where he and Emilia reportedly met with President Jokowi and Jakarta Governor Ahok. IPAC interview with Emilia, Jakarta, 14 January 2016. See also http://www.tawhidi.com/?page_id=2503.

few exceptions, the movement has not been violent, and Sunni-Shi'a clashes are extremely rare. Democratic space has given more room to hardline groups to demand enforcement of religious orthodoxy, however, and anti-Shi'a rhetoric has reached new levels with the founding of ANNAS.

The potentially lethal factor in the mix is ISIS: the increasing shrillness of ISIS's anti-Shi'a propaganda and the emergence of pro-ISIS groups in Indonesia that want to demonstrate their loyalty to the caliphate. When combined with the increased public attention to the Shi'a community that groups like ANNAS have brought about, the results could be deadly.

Before ISIS, Indonesia's jihadis, with one exception, showed no interest in targeting Shi'a. That appears to be changing, and Shi'a institutions in Jakarta could be most at risk, given the jihadi desire for international publicity. (In 2005, one terrorist memo concluded that the only two places worth attacking in Indonesia were Jakarta and Bali because these were the only places where news coverage was guaranteed.)

The anti-Shi'a rhetoric of hardline advocacy organisations creates an atmosphere that makes extremist violence more likely. It puts the Shi'a community more in the public consciousness, and it opens the possibility that pro-ISIS groups in areas of high anti-Shi'a activity could use the issue for recruitment. Salafi cooperation with salafi jihadists is rare, but it is telling that a few examples of anti-Shi'a plots on the part of jihadis have involved individuals with Salafi backgrounds.

The burden is on the Indonesian government at all levels to ban anti-Shi'a incitement, using existing articles of the criminal code; set an example by prosecuting anyone urging violence; ensure that no official funding or other form of endorsement of anti-Shi'a organisations takes place; and that Shi'a institutions and individuals are accorded the fullest protection of the law.

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The Institute for Policy Analysis of Conflict (IPAC) was founded in 2013 on the principle that accurate analysis is a critical first step toward preventing violent conflict. Our mission is to explain the dynamics of conflict—why it started, how it changed, what drives it, who benefits—and get that information quickly to people who can use it to bring about positive change.

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